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MRS. DINES'S JEWELS

A Mid-Atlantic Romance

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF "AN OCEAN TRAGEDY" "THE WRECK OF THE 'GROSVENOR'" "MY DANISH SWEETHEART" "A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART" ETC.

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NEW YORK

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"ONE OF THE FIGURES IN THE BOAT EXTENDED HIS HANDS."—[*See page* 112.

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MRS. DINES'S JEWELS.

A MID-ATLANTIC ROMANCE.

ADVANCE, AUSTRALIA!—At the recent sale of valuable jewelry, to which we referred in our issue of yesterday, the golden fern-branch, with a lizard, lady-bird, and a snail upon it (said to have been worn by Queen Elizabeth), was sold to Mr. Croker, acting, it is understood, for the Earl of ——, for the price of seven hundred guineas. Other costly historic knick-knacks, such as a golden frog set with jewels, a chain of golden scallop shells with chains of agate and jet, fetched extraordinary prices. Great interest was exhibited in the bids for the magnificent diamond necklace, remarkable for its large central stone, known as the "Light of the Age," which was ultimately sold to Mrs. E. F. Dines for the enormous sum of £22,750. Mrs. Dines is the wife of a millionaire Australian squatter, resident in Sydney, New South Wales. We understand she is making the "round voyage"—as it is called—from Australia to England and back again, for her health. But a further purpose of her journey is indicated by the above purchase, and by others which chiefly comprise pictures and old engravings. Mrs. Dines sails in that well-known Australian liner, the *Southern Cross*, in the course of a few weeks.—*The Sun*, Friday, August 12, 185–.

CHAPTER I.

THE "SOUTHERN CROSS" HAULS OUT OF DOCK.

On the 24th of October, in the year 185–, a large, handsome ship hauled out of the East India Docks. The words "*Southern Cross, London,*" were painted in white letters upon the counter under her cabin windows. She floated deep, for she was freighted with a valuable cargo for a city in the far Pacific.

A ship hauling out of dock, outward bound on a long voyage, is a sight full of interest and excitement. Her movements are slow; she gives the mind plenty of leisure to observe what is passing. It is very different with a steamer; for with *her* it is but the letting go of the shore fasts, and the ringing of the engine-room bell, whereupon the great metal structure trembles from stem to stern to the first motions of the engines, as though, like something living, she fetched her deepest breath for the start; the propeller revolves, and, in a few moments, the whole floating mass, that may be as big as an island, is off and away, with hushed decks and a twinkling figure or two pacing the bridge.

But the hauling of a sailing ship out of dock involves a great deal of pulling and dragging, of shouting and

swearing; there is much melancholy chorusing of drunken throats winding round capstans on legs atwist, like corkscrews, with drink. It generally happens that an intoxicated seaman falls overboard in attempting to leap into the ship from the pier-head, and the vessel is delayed while he is being fished for. Drunken sailors come staggering along in a small drove, urged by the Hebrew crimp, whose chimney-pot hat is radiant with the grease with which he anoints his ringlets. This, at least, is as it used to be. We are now content with pier-head jumps, and the runner is forced by the statute to watch from afar.

There was some confusion as the *Southern Cross* hauled out of the East India Dock. The saloon passengers would embark at Gravesend, but some thirty or forty steerage folk had arrived on the preceding evening; they filled the quarter-deck and waist. The whistling of the wind blowing over the Isle of Dogs into the thick and complicated rigging of the ship was vocal with the crying of babies, with the lamentations of women, waving, with streaming eyes, to people ashore; with the maudlin laughter of inebriated Jacks, the shouts of dock officials, the responsive bawling of mud pilot and mates, and with the cries to and from a tug manœuvring just clear of the pier-heads.

Presently the ship had floated clear of the docks, and was showing her broadside to the spectators on shore, with the tug slowly steaming ahead to bring the hawser taut. One nowhere sees the like of such a

ship as the *Southern Cross* in these days. You might as well seek for a Symondite *Vernon*, or such a beauty as the old auxiliary *Impérieuse;* you might as well hunt the waters for a sight of Blackwood's *Euryalus* under a full breast of sail, as search the docks or the ocean for another *Southern Cross.* It is all iron now; it was nearly all wood then: timber moulded into shapes of frigate-like beauty. The *Southern Cross* had glistening stern windows; she was plentifully decorated with gilt about the quarters and at the stem-head, and, as she lay upon the smooth surface of the dark gray river, the water at either extremity of her blushed with light. But you needed the distance of the horizon to mistake her for a man-of-war, spite of her row of painted ports and her large and heavy tops and the defiant posture with which she had been made to sit upon the water by the stevedore. You heard cocks crowing aboard, you smelt the delicate odor of compressed hay; you caught the mournful lowing of a cow, the grunt of hogs, the noise of sheep and turkeys. Then, again, on board a frigate you would not expect to see drunken sailors reeling from rail to rail, flinging their caps overboard, and vociferating messages to Sal and Sue; such a sight you would not expect to witness on the forecastle of a man-of-war.

It was late in October. The autumn chill was in the air, and the cold seemed the keener for the gray sky and for the sloppy, soup-like swirl of the broad

and dirty river, whose stream of tide was making oceanward; and the colder, too, did the morning seem for the leave-taking—the eternal leave-taking of many—which the sight of that tall, heavily-rigged, outward-bound ship suggested. Surely one feels that the North Pole must be nearer to England than most Arctic explorers imagine, when one stands upon the deck of an outward-bound ship on a chilly autumn morning, and views the grimy banks of Thames stealing slowly past, and listens to the sound of the weeping of women rising up from the quarter-deck, and to the hissing noise of foam seething into the ship's wake as it falls in hills of snow from the revolving wheels of the tug, which is dragging one away from home, and from all that home signifies.

The *Southern Cross* proceeded down the river in the wake of the tug, gliding slowly through the many bends which make a very serpent of the Thames from St. Katherine's Dock to Sea Reach. The river thirty odd years ago was not as it now is; but what it lacked of the majesty it now possesses it supplied by a vast variety of picturesque and romantic detail. There were no huge ocean steamers lifting bows as high as cliffs over the water of the river, with sides discolored by oceanic conflict, and with more passengers between the rails than would go to the population of a considerable village; there were no long metal sailing craft, carrying four masts, with hulls ly-

ing flat as planks upon the water, levelling a complication of yards at the heavens, with boats' davits for catheads, a bridge for a quarter-deck, and a donkey engine to get the anchor with; but the marine processions, nevertheless, thirty odd years ago, were fuller of color, were out and away more vital with the true marine qualities than they are now. As the *Southern Cross* floated astern of the tug through the back-wash of the paddles, her steerage passengers found many things to look at, to point to, to raise exclamations of wonder over. It might be a Gravesend steamer, with tall funnel, merrily slapping the water with her paddles as she pushed past with a purple-faced man motioning with one arm on her paddle-box, and a little company of men and women eating sandwiches and drinking bottled beer round about the companion that conducted into the gloomy, close-smelling cabin. It might be a gaunt collier, staggering under dark and well-patched canvas from bank to bank as she reeled athwart her road with her yards fore and aft; her crew of five men and a boy—the skipper at the tiller—waiting for the next howl of "Ready about!" their hands in their pockets, and their teeth showing like a nigger's in their blackened faces as they grinned at the passing show. In the span of a single Reach there would be a score of different types of sailing craft to be seen, on that chilly October morning more than thirty years ago, when the well-known Australian liner, the *Southern Cross*,

was towing down the river for a mooring buoy off Gravesend.

Long before she was off the town a calm had settled upon her decks. The drunken sailors had been tumbled below into their forecastle, and lay there snorting in many postures. Those who were sober moved about decorously, doing such ship's work as was needed. The "mud pilot" stood on the forecastle head ready to shout directions to the tug, and the first and second officers paced the after part of the vessel, called the poop, keeping a bright lookout on the two fellows at the wheel, that the pilot's orders to the helm might be promptly executed.

It was not until the big ship had swung to her mooring buoy, and was lying at rest off the town of Gravesend, with the tug close at hand ready to catch hold of the vessel's hawser afresh in the morning and tow her clear of the South Foreland, that the Captain came on deck. He stepped up the ladder that led from the saloon, and stood for some moments looking about him; and, first of all, he sent his gaze aloft, for the immediate instinct of the master of a sailing vessel is to take a view of his spars; he then looked over the side into the water, to observe if there were any boats under the gangway; and then crossing the deck, he raised a binocular-glass to his eyes, and steadfastly surveyed that part of Gravesend where the pier stands, and where, thirty odd years ago, the boats of the Gravesend watermen bobbed and jerked in clusters.

"Here come some of them!" he said to himself, after a brief spell of staring through his binocular, and, walking to the forward end of the poop, he descended the flight of steps which terminated on the quarter-deck, and took up a position at the open gangway, first peering through it to observe that the accommodation ladder was at the side.

The master of the *Southern Cross* was named Sparshot. He was a square, short man, with little blue eyes, and an expression of countenance that seemed to flutter and hover on the very brink of a smile. It was not hard to guess that he was something of a sea dandy. Had Sparshot lived in these days, no mariner of the red flag would have worn with greater enjoyment the ludicrous livery of buttons and gilt which ship-owners oblige the plain, respectable seamen of the quarter-deck and the bridge to go clothed in. In Sparshot's time, however, the ambition of the merchant sailor, in the direction of splendor, seldom rose higher than brass buttons and a brass band around the cap; but these decorations being mainly appropriated by captains of steamers carrying passengers between England and France, the commanders of vessels such as the *Southern Cross* were satisfied to remain clothed as their forefathers had been—that is to say, in broadcloth and pilot-cloth. Some of them wore tall chimney-pot hats, and this head-gear they would cling to whether under the Line in a dead calm or hove-to off the Horn in a hurricane blind with

snow. They also buttoned themselves up in frock-coats, so that, but for their weather-worn faces, and but for their peculiar rolling gait, which enabled the most lubberly eye to instantly recognize them as sailors, they were not to be distinguished from landsmen.

But Captain Sparshot—and much of the moral of this story will be found stowed away in this statement—was something of a sea dandy; indeed, I may say he was very much of a sea dandy, spite of his being a married man, and hard upon eight-and-forty years of age, and bald with thirty years of ocean usage, as though his head were a pebble of the beach polished by the immemorial heave of the breaker. His waistcoat was of many colors; an immense pin decorated his satin cravat; his trousers were cut, not in the flowing fashion of the deep, but strictly after the latest West End style; his boots were varnished, and the great-coat that he wore open over an under-coat of black cloth would have been styled by a tailor a light and elegant garment.

He stood in the gangway of his ship looking at an approaching boat. In the stern-sheets of the boat that was rowed by a single pair of oars sat a lady clothed in furs. She might indeed have passed for a part of the cargo—a bale of skins, say, that had been overlooked in the docks, and was now being sent on in a hurry to catch the ship. As the boat approached the vessel this unwieldy woman flourished her hand, on which the Captain gave her a low bow, swinging his

cap with its naval peak down almost to the deck. He then got upon the accommodation ladder, and descended the steps to help the stout lady to get out of the boat. This was an act of extraordinary condescension on the part of Captain Sparshot, and probably unparalleled in the annals of merchant sea-captains.

"The first to arrive, and the most welcome of all," said he. "But not a word, my dear Mrs. Dines, till I have you safe on deck. Confound ye, you lubber, why don't you haul your boat's stern in? Don't attempt to jump, my dear madam. Put your whole weight upon my arm—so! Here we are! And now I suppose that rogue of a waterman wants to fleece you. Leave him to my chief officer; he shall settle with him."

Keeping hold of Mrs. Dines's hand he led the way up the steep ladder, and the stout lady followed, blowing very hard until she had put her foot upon the deck, when she exclaimed, "And glad I am I'm safe on board at last!"

"Mr. Parr," exclaimed the Captain to the chief mate, who was standing at the foot of the poop-ladder, "be so good as to settle with that fellow alongside, and see that Mrs. Dines's parcels are taken into her cabin. Where's Mrs. Dines's maid?" and as he spoke Mrs. Dines's maid came out of the saloon.

"So, there you are, Pittar?" cried Mrs. Dines to the woman. "Well, I missed you—indeed I did. But

"DESCENDED THE STEPS TO HELP THE STOUT LADY."

there was no room for you at my friend's house, and so it couldn't be helped. Was you sick in coming down the river?"

"Not at all, ma'am," answered Pittar; "the shipping is a wonderful sight indeed, and I was too hinterested to feel nauseated."

"Stop till you see the ocean, Pittar," said Mrs. Dines; "and stop till you see Sydney 'arbor. Take them parcels to my cabin. I hope it's perfectly comfortable, and that the bed's properly made. What a day of excitement it's been. Capting Sparshot, I must truly and really drink a glass of sherry and munch a biscuit."

"Step into the cuddy, Mrs. Dines," said the Captain, making a hook of his arm for the stout lady to take. "Mr. Parr, should another boat come along with passengers let me know. There are two people, Mrs. Dines, I wish to compliment by receiving them at the gangway," he continued, as he led the way into the saloon. "Their sailing in our ship is an excellent advertisement for us. They are very highly connected people indeed—Major the Honorable Sebastian Stopford-Creake and his widowed sister, the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock. You see the fashionable newspapers mention the comings and goings of people in their condition, and the *Southern Cross* cannot be too widely advertised."

"And where are they sailing to?" said Mrs. Dines, sitting down.

"All the way out," answered the Captain. "Steward, some sherry and biscuits, and look alive."

"How many passengers in all, Capting Sparshot?" inquired Mrs. Dines, lifting up her veil and looking around her.

"Twelve," he answered. "Miss Sophia de la Taste returns with us; Mr. and Mrs. du Boulay you also know. The others are strangers."

He poured out a glass of wine, and filled half a wine-glass for himself.

"Everything is perfectly safe, I hope, Capting?" inquired Mrs. Dines.

"Safe as the Bank of England," he answered.

"I hope my objects of virtue, particularly the engravings, are packed in a dry place. Should anything be stained by salt-water Mr. Dines would never forgive me."

"They are stowed away in a spare cabin below," said the Captain; "and no salt-water can touch them unless the ship founders."

"One picter alone cost me three hundred pounds," said Mrs. Dines. "It's Cupid aiming an arrow. It'll be the envy and admiration of the whole colony."

"Have no fear. Cupid shall go ashore dry enough."

"And the jewelry?"

"In my iron safe in yonder cabin," answered the Captain, pointing to his berth.

"There's another boat making for the ship, sir," called Mr. Parr, the chief mate, through the saloon door.

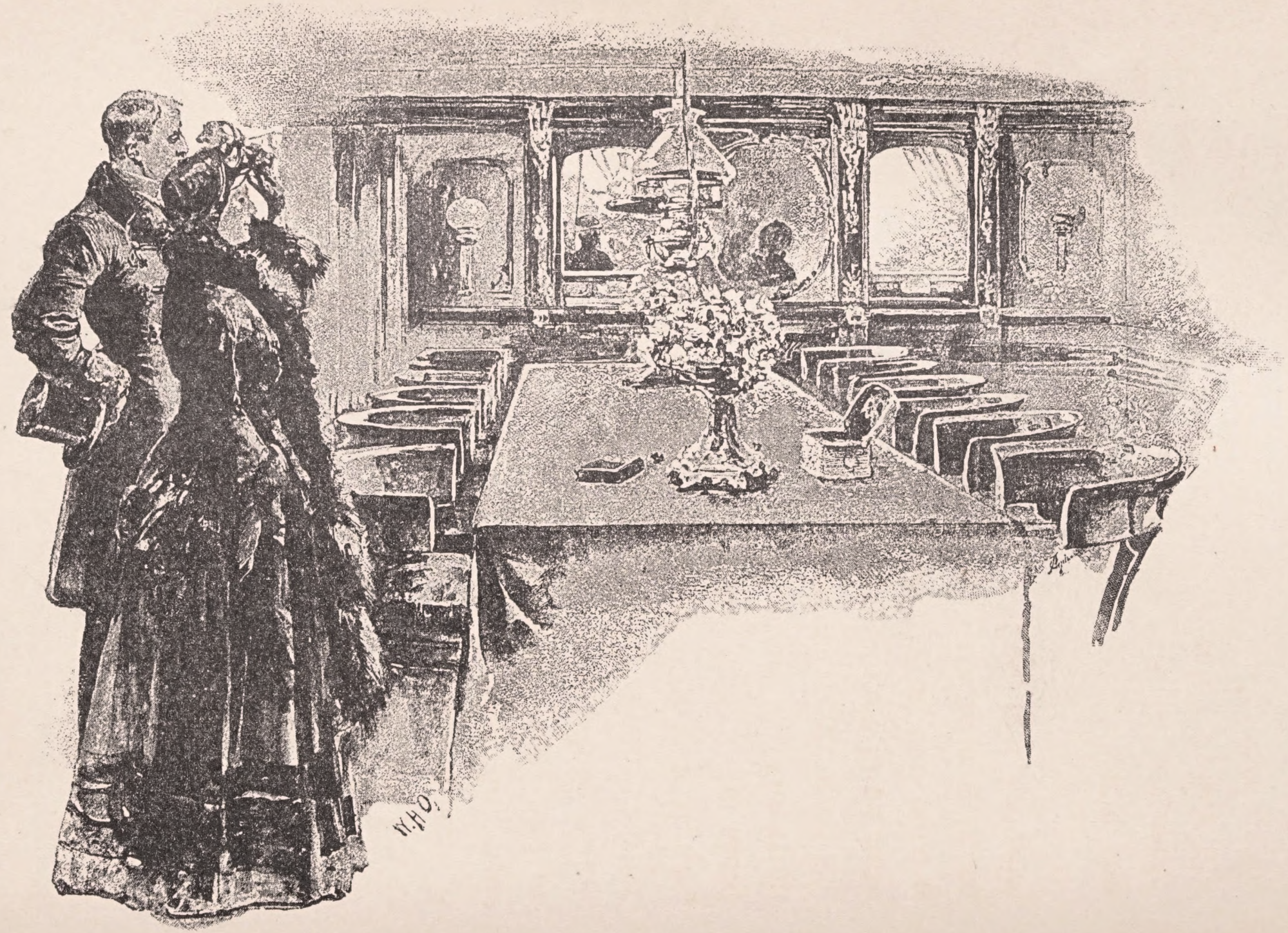
Captain Sparshot rose, apologized to Mrs. Dines for leaving her, and went onto the quarter-deck with his binocular-glass, which he pointed at the boat that had been reported to him by the mate. Meanwhile Mrs. Dines, emptying her glass of sherry, entered her cabin.

CHAPTER II.

THE PASSENGERS OF THE "SOUTHERN CROSS."

THERE was still plenty of daylight abroad, but in the atmosphere floated a dimness as of smoke. A breeze was blowing up the river, and the cold, wide breast of water friskily streamed in ripples; and inward-bound craft swept by with long white wakes astern of them, while those beating down swirled, heeling to the line of their covering boards, with arcs of foam behind them as they shifted their helm amid a thunder of canvas for the next "board." The wind sang in melancholy notes in the thick rigging of the ship. A few groups of steerage passengers hung here and there, and their voices came to the ear with a sulky, growling, complaining note in them, as if those who spoke were cursing the luck that had brought them to the ship.

The Captain stood in the gangway. Clearly the people who were approaching the ship in a wherry were the individuals to whom he intended to pay the compliment of a personal reception. Putting down his binocular-glass, he descended the ladder, and, on arriving at the grating at the bottom of it, he made



"SHE LIFTED THE VEIL AND DISCLOSED HER FACE."

a low bow to the occupants of the boat, which at that moment swept alongside.

There were two persons, a man and a woman. The man as he rose in the boat exhibited a fine, handsome, tall figure. The woman was dressed in deep mourning, and her face was concealed by a crape veil.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Major Stopford-Creake?" exclaimed Captain Sparshot.

"That is my name," responded the tall military figure. "Who are you, sir?"

"I am Captain Sparshot, master of this ship. Glad to welcome ye aboard. The lady in the veil will be your sister, I presume? Madam, give me your hand;" and with a variety of sea-bows, the Captain conducted the couple on deck.

"Am I to report any more boats, sir?" exclaimed the chief officer, as the Captain passed him.

"No, sir," answered the Captain. "See that whatever baggage is in the boat is handed up. This way, if you please," said he, addressing the Major and his companion; and they entered the saloon.

"Which is my sister's cabin?" inquired the Major.

"I will send for the stewardess," said Captain Sparshot.

"What a very beautiful ship!" exclaimed the lady in the crape veil; and as she uttered the words she lifted the veil and disclosed her face.

She was a pretty woman, probably eight-and-twenty years of age. Her hair was a reddish brown; and

her eyes a dark brown, large, liquid, and luminous. Her complexion was very clear, her lips red, her teeth white and regular, and her smile as she gazed around her was arch and sweet. It was understood that she was making the voyage for her health. Her mourning was handsome.

"What a very beautiful ship!" she exclaimed; and Captain Sparshot then and there thought that he had never heard any woman speak with more melodious accents. It was easy to see that she was high-born. Sparshot had not much acquaintance with the aristocracy, but his confidence in his own judgment was profound; and as he furtively glanced at the pretty face of the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock, he mentally pronounced her as perfect an example of female quality as ever stepped aboard a ship for a voyage.

Nor was the Major unworthy of such a sister. He was a very handsome man indeed; standing at least six foot in his stockings; with a large iron-gray mustache, an aquiline nose, a keen, gray, searching eye, and iron-gray hair cropped close behind in true army style. He, too, was in mourning; and Captain Sparshot gazed with admiration at the excellent, easy, gentlemanly fit of the man's whole dress.

Mrs. Wreathock withdrew to her cabin; the Major remained for a while talking with the Captain. He complained in strong language of his sister having been disappointed by a lady's-maid whom she had engaged; he then went to his berth. A little while

later several boats came alongside the ship. They contained the rest of the passengers, whose luggage, together with Mrs. Dines's and the Major's and his sister's, had been stowed away in the hold when the vessel was in the East India Docks. There was now a great deal of confusion in the saloon—or cuddy, as it was then called; passengers ran in and out of their berths; the head steward and his assistants were lighting the lamps and laying the cloth for dinner; the stewardess flitted here and there, knocking at this door, then at that, answering calls, and adding to the general bustle. But on deck all was quiet. It was raining, and the evening shadow had drawn down dark upon the river; the lights of Gravesend mistily winked on the starboard beam, and the riding lights of many craft, which had brought up off the town, twinkled like stars upon the brows of the rocking or motionless shadows which they beaconed. All the 'tween-deck passengers were below, under cover; but the officer walking the poop-deck—a phantasmal shape glistening in oil-skins—could hear, through the crying and piping of the wind aloft, the sounds of a concertina merrily playing in the forecastle, with the frequent hoarse voices of men still under the influence of drink bursting with hurricane lungs into a chorus.

The after accommodation of the *Southern Cross* was somewhat unusual in ships of her class in the days to which this story belongs. Her saloon occu-

pied the breadth of the vessel. It was a handsomely furnished apartment, with two long tables, on each side of which were several revolving chairs. The cabins were abaft the saloon, and between them and the saloon was what might be termed a lounging place—a sort of drawing-room, containing a piano, arm-chairs, sofas, a whist-table or two, and the like. Forward of the saloon, on the port or left-hand side of the ship, was the Captain's berth, a very large and handsome cabin; and confronting it were two other berths, respectively occupied by the chief mate and the second mate. Such was the disposition of the interior under the poop-deck of the *Southern Cross*. There were cabins below in the steerage, which part of the ship was entered by a small hatch just under the fore part of the poop; but either the *Southern Cross* did not carry any steerage people this voyage, or no applications had been received from what, in those days, would be styled second-class passengers. The solitary occupant of the steerage was Mr. Wilkinson, the ship's surgeon. Down there he slept, and down there was his "Surgery."

Now when the steward and his colleagues had lighted the silver-plated saloon lamps and draped the tables with snow-white damask, and glorified them by all requisites of crystal and plate, and decanters of wine, and centre-pieces containing flowers, the cuddy of the ship looked as brilliant, elegant, and hospitable an interior as the heart of passenger could desire.

There were tall mirrors to reflect the light, and then there was the accentuation of contrast; for the saloon windows in the fore part overlooked the quarter-deck, and the glass of those windows, as well as the glass of the skylights, was blind with wet and black with the night, and in the highest degree, therefore, suggestive of the rain, cold, and discomfort outside.

The dinner-bell rang, the ladies and gentlemen came out of their cabins, and the Captain took his seat at the head of the table on the starboard side. There was no motion in the ship; she lay as still as though hard and fast upon the Gravesend shore. Hence nobody could pretend to feel ill. In fact, several of the passengers were old and seasoned travellers. Both Mrs. Dines and Miss de la Taste had weathered the Horn. Mr. and Mrs. du Boulay were also returning to Australia in the ship that had brought them thence.

The Captain, as I have said, seated himself at the head of the table on the right-hand side, and the head steward contrived—by order of the Captain, no doubt—that the passengers should be accommodated thus: the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock on Sparshot's right, Mrs. Dines on Sparshot's left, Mr. Winthrop next to Mrs. Wreathock, and Mr. du Boulay next to Mrs. Dines. Then came Mrs. du Boulay, and alongside her was seated Major the Honorable Sebastian Stopford-Creake. The rest of the passengers were seated at the table on the left, at the head of which was the

first mate, Mr. Parr, while Mr. Wilkinson, the ship's surgeon, took his place at the bottom.

Mrs. Dines was the last to arrive at table. Everybody was then seated, and when she took her place all eyes were instantly fixed upon her. There was nothing in the least degree conspicuous in her apparel. Her dress was a black silk, and on her head was a black lace cap. But her jewelry! Her fingers were loaded with rings, and every time she moved her hands the precious stones flashed as though white, green, and red fires streamed from her fat mottled knuckles. Round her neck was a thick gold chain, and at the extremity of it, at her waist, dangled, at the very least, a dozen costly odds and ends, mainly gold coins, all of them of extraordinary rarity, and one or two as big as a crown piece. She also wore a very splendid brooch, and ear-rings of diamonds and other gems.

She was a vast, unwieldy, shapeless mass of a woman, a homely, good-natured looking person, of a type of vulgarity essentially commonplace. She was not an Australian. No colony could produce the sort of vulgarity that was incarnated in Mrs. Dines. She was English, and her vulgarity was radically English. In her youth she had been a house-maid, but on the invitation of an uncle, whose reason for leaving England when three-and-twenty years of age was one of those domestic mysteries which good-natured people are willing to let alone, she took shipping for the An-

tipodes, and within a year of her arrival was fortunate enough to attract the attention and win the love of young Mr. Dines, a gentleman of about eight-and-twenty, who, having failed in the ham and beef line in London, had emigrated to Australia; had picked up some gold, had started as a squatter, and at the time of his marriage was doing very well. He was doing very well, I say, at the time of his marriage, but afterwards he did very much better. In a few years he made a large fortune, and at the date of this story Mr. Dines was everywhere regarded in New South Wales as a millionaire.

The contrast between Mrs. Dines and the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock, who confronted her, was extraordinarily marked. Captain Sparshot found the young widow very much prettier than he had at first imagined. Her widow's cap could not conceal the beauty and luxuriance of her hair. Her eyes were full of fire and expression. She did not look ill; her appearance did not suggest any urgent need of a voyage for the sake of her health; but then it was to be easily guessed that her bereavement must be recent, and that her brother was taking her to Australia, not perhaps because her health was imperilled, but because her grief needed the distraction of a long absence from all melancholy associations. She was very quiet, very reserved, spoke seldom; her voice was refined and musical, her smile sweet, with perhaps a hint of sadness in it, though this color of melancholy

might come from her widow's weeds. Yet whenever she smiled her prettiness was heightened into a sort of beauty by an expression of archness that showed like a look of amiable wonder in her, of tender surprise not wanting in artlessness.

Not much was said at this first dinner on board the *Southern Cross*, and what was said chiefly took the form of questions addressed to the Captain. The few observations which Mrs. Dines let fall were more or less directed at Mrs. Wreathock. But the young widow scarcely noticed her; once or twice a faint smile parted her lips, but she appeared to have eyes for little more than the interior of the saloon, around which she gazed with a childlike interest, and more than once she complimented Captain Sparshot on the beauty of his ship.

For some time the Major ate and drank without uttering a syllable. His stare was prolonged and peculiar, and everybody within range of his eyes was honored by a fixed and deliberate regard. He seemed to be trying to form an opinion of the characters and the social position of the people with whom he and his sister were to live until Sydney Bay was entered.

"Pray, Captain Sparshot," said the gentleman named Winthrop, "how long are we to remain at anchor here in the Thames?"

"We start to-morrow before daybreak," answered the Captain.

"What keeps us here, Capting?" said Mrs. Dines.

"Business, madam, business," answered Captain Sparshot, with a glance at Mrs. Wreathock, whose fine eyes were fastened upon him; "business is the motive power of the mercantile marine. It starts us, and it stops us. It's a sort of moral steam-engine, and a good many boilers are constantly bursting in consequence of it."

"I believe," said Major Stopford-Creake, speaking for the first time, "that you call at Madeira?"

"That is so," answered the Captain.

"Is it not somewhat unusual for sailing ships bound to Australia to call at Madeira?" exclaimed Mr. du Boulay.

"It is," said the Captain.

"What are you calling at Madeery for?" asked Mrs. Dines.

"To receive a consignment of the wines of that island," answered the Captain.

In this way ran the talk on that first day at table on board the *Southern Cross*. When dinner was over, the ladies withdrew to that part of the saloon which has been described as furnished with pianos, sofas, and so on. The chief mate arose from his seat at the head of the port table and walked through the cuddy onto the deck, followed by Mr. Wilkinson, the surgeon; but the Captain, Mr. Winthrop, the Major, and one or two other gentlemen kept their seats, and Sparshot sent the wine round.

"We are very few for a big ship," said the Major.

"But so much the better; the voyage will resemble a yachting cruise."

"There are a number of passengers in the 'tween-decks," said Mr. Winthrop.

"They will not trouble us here," exclaimed the Captain.

"Was that Mrs. Dines who sat on your left, Captain?" exclaimed a gentleman, a Mr. Eden, who had quitted his seat at the mate's table to join the Captain's.

"Yes, sir, that was Mrs. Dines," answered the Captain, in a subdued voice; and turning his head so as to get the after end of the saloon into the corner of his eye, for though the pillar of the mizzen-mast, along with the piano and a sofa or two formed, so to speak, a division between the living part of the saloon and the drawing-room part of it, yet the space where the ladies were seated was open, and voices in any degree raised were in consequence to be overheard.

"I never saw such jewelry in my life," said Mr. Eden.

"Too much of it; much too much of it," murmured Mr. Winthrop.

"There is no good in having valuable things if you don't exhibit them," said Major Stopford-Creake. "Figure yourself a lover of painting; you buy a Rubens or a Guido, and you hang it up with its face to the wall!"

"Very true for you, sir," said Sparshot, with a high-

ly respectful and very appreciative inclination of the head.

"Much depends upon what sort of a person it is that wears jewelry," said Mr. Winthrop. "A duchess may exhibit herself incrusted with gems, and loaded with gold, and nobody thinks anything of it. But—" and here he looked in the direction of Mrs. Dines.

Major Stopford-Creake smiled.

"I have heard of Mr. Dines," said Mr. Eden. "I believe he is one of the richest men in Australia."

"He is a very rich man, sir," said the Captain.

"By George!" exclaimed Mr. Winthrop, suddenly striking the table with his fist; "it just occurs to me that Mrs. Dines must be the lady who purchased a wonderful necklace the other day. Yes! Of course. I now remember. She was to sail in this ship. There was an account of the sale of jewels in an evening paper. What was the sum she gave—forty thousand pounds wasn't it?"

"Softly, gentlemen, softly," exclaimed Sparshot. "Lord, how figures multiply when one hasn't got to pay. Half forty, sir, half forty."

"What do you say she bought?" inquired the Major.

The Captain turned his head again so as to obtain an askant view of the ladies at the extremity of the saloon, and then dropping his voice into a low, growling key, he told Major Stopford-Creake that Mrs. Dines, having been advised to make the voyage from

Australia to England and back again for her health, had been commissioned by her husband to make sundry expensive purchases in the shape of jewels and works of art. One of the purchases was a magnificent diamond necklace that had cost hard upon £23,000. But having said this, the Captain halted abruptly in his speech, and looked around him uneasily as though he feared he should be suspected of overtalking himself. The Major's expression, however, was one of inattention. Mr. Winthrop was helping himself to more claret and did not seem to hear, and Mr. Eden merely exclaimed, "Oh, indeed!"

When Sparshot again spoke it was to change the subject, and shortly afterwards he and the Major and Mr. Winthrop and Mr. du Boulay stepped outside the cuddy, under the shelter of the overhanging ledge of the poop, to smoke a cigar, for in those days there were no smoking-rooms on board passenger sailing ships.

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN SPARSHOT "TAKES SIGHTS."

Long before sunrise next morning the tug had laid hold of the *Southern Cross*, and some time between ten and eleven the ship was off the North Foreland, with a few wings of jibs and staysails hoisted, and the tug ahead dragging her along at some five or six miles in the hour. It was a bright morning; the sea smooth, rippling in light blue lines out of the east, whence a small, pleasant breeze of wind was blowing; and the heavens were lofty and beautiful with the wide spread of the delicate cloud called a "mackerel" sky, every link of the compacted vapor touched into tints of rose and yellow. The cliffs of the Foreland and of Broadstairs hung in milk-white terraces over the blue curl and creaming yeast of the breakers, and seaward were twenty sights to be seen: chocolate-colored smacks making northward for the fisheries; a collier with dark sails striving for Ramsgate harbor and coming up to windward with the tide; the dusty smoke of a steamer shearing through it, past the southern limb of the Goodwins on her way to the French coast, her hull and funnels out of sight.

There was no motion in the water; the passengers

had breakfasted and were on deck. The pilot was still in charge of the ship, and the Captain was, therefore, a man of leisure, and he was now making the most of his opportunities by stumping the poop with Mrs. Wreathock on one side of him and Mrs. Dines on the other. The Major, in a great-coat with fur round the neck and sleeves, paced to and fro with Mr. du Boulay; Mr. Eden conversed with the pilot, and the rest of the passengers moved here and there in twos and threes, admiring the scenery of the Foreland coast, peering into the binnacle-stand, or staring at the 'tween-deck passengers who hung about in the waist or on the forcastle.

"I wish we could have weather of this sort all the way to Australia and home again," said Mrs. Wreathock, in her musical voice.

"We should want more wind than this to make a passage," said Sparshot.

"I suppose you will live ashore, ma'am, while you are at Sydney?" said Mrs. Dines.

"Yes," exclaimed Mrs. Wreathock, smiling; "I am sure my brother and I will have had enough of the ship by that time."

"I hope you will come and stop with Mr. Dines and me. It sounds a little early to ask," said Mrs. Dines, "but it don't signify how long beforehand you give an invitation, providing it's genuine and 'arty. Some people asks merely out of politeness, and in their souls they pray that their invites won't be ac-

cepted. Mr. Dines and me are not of such. If you and your brother will stop with us we shall be truly honored."

She aspirated the "h" in "honored" so strongly, that the Captain, to conceal his mirth, stepped aside to the standard compass, and stood viewing it till his grin had faded. Mrs. Wreathock thanked Mrs. Dines pleasantly and gratefully. The Captain rejoined the ladies.

"I have some wonderful picters down-stairs," said Mrs. Dines, "but there'll be no unpacking of 'em, I'm afraid, for you to see till they're safe in Sydney, ready for hanging. At least, *I* think them wonderful. I may have been cheated. If so, Mr. Dines 'll be very unsparing. I'm not much of a judge, myself, of pict-ers. People laugh at me because I often say that the frames are the best part of 'em, and so they are! What's a picter without a frame?"

"No, no, Mrs. Dines, I'm not with you there," said Sparshot; "you might as well ask, What is a man without a cocked hat?"

"Well, and if you was an admiral, Capting Sparshot, what would you be without a cocked hat?" said Mrs. Dines. "Only think of Lord Nelson giving his orders in a wide-awake."

"I observed last evening," said Mrs. Wreathock, "that you wear some very beautiful coins attached to your chain, Mrs. Dines. I am very fond of coins. If I were rich I should love to collect them."

On this Mrs. Dines, opening the lower portion of the very rich, warm mantle she wore, lifted the mass of coins and trinkets which hung at the end of her chain, and begged Mrs. Wreathock to inspect them. Captain Sparshot left the ladies and joined the pilot, with whom he entered into conversation. Mrs. Wreathock and Mrs. Dines seated themselves on a bench against one of the skylights, that the coins might be conveniently handled and their history related. When the coins had been examined and admired the ladies resumed their walk, in the course of which, on Mrs. Wreathock lamenting that her maid had failed her at the last moment, when it was too late to supply her place, Mrs. Dines insisted on her employing Pittar whenever she should have occasion for the services of a lady's-maid.

"That vulgar old woman," said Mr. du Boulay to his wife, "is going to make up to the widow because she's an honorable. I bet she will ask Mrs. Wreathock and her brother to her house, and the association of such guests will end in old Dines sailing for Europe, and going to work to get a knighthood, and then that fat and dreadful woman will be *her ladyship*."

But now the ship was off the South Foreland, where the Channel yawns widely past the extremity of the deadly shoal of Goodwins, and both the *Southern Cross* and the tug that was towing her fell a-courtesying. Here, indeed, was to be felt a little movement called a swell. The breeze, too, freshened

on a sudden, and orders were given for the fore and main top-sails to be set—large whole sails in those days, the main carrying four reefs as though spread by a line-of-battle ship. Mrs. Wreathock turned pale, and came to a stand by the side of Mrs. Dines with her hand to her brow.

"I believe I shall have to lie down," said she.

"Then take my arm, and let me see you comfortable," said Mrs. Dines. Whereupon Mrs. Wreathock, whose face was certainly very white, passed her little gloved hand under the stout arm of Mrs. Dines, and the two ladies descended the companion-stairs.

"It looks as if my sister were going to be ill," said Major Stopford-Creake, speaking to Mr. Winthrop, who stood near.

"I am not surprised," answered Mr. Winthrop; "I feel as if I were rather going that way myself."

"I was never sea-sick in my life," said the Major. "I have made three voyages to India, and never knew what nausea was. A sudden shock is considered a good remedy for sea-sickness. There was a fellow in my regiment who suffered deucedly when upon the water. He had a very fine dog with him in the ship. One day the dog fell overboard. My friend implored the captain to stop the ship and pick the dog up. The captain declined to do anything of the sort; on which my friend, sea-sick as he was, pulling off his coat, went overboard after the dog, and, of course, they had to stop the ship to pick him up.

Haw, haw, haw! Both man and beast were rescued, and never afterwards did my friend complain of sea-sickness."

"Excuse me for abruptly leaving you," said Mr. Winthrop, and he disappeared.

"What sort of weather are we going to have down Channel, Captain?" inquired the Major, as Sparshot slowly approached, looking aloft.

"Nice windy weather, I hope," answered Sparshot. "I like the look of those mare's-tails streaming away in a fringe from that mackerel sky."

"What time do you give yourself to make Madeira in?"

"Why, suppose you call it ten days," answered Sparshot.

Here the pilot came up to the Captain, and the Major stepping to the rail, leaned against it, and with folded arms and thoughtful face stood watching the sailors making sail upon the ship.

"He is certainly the handsomest man I have ever seen," exclaimed Miss de la Taste to the younger Miss Sparkes, as they stood cautiously glancing at him from the other side of the deck.

"I think he is haughty," said Miss Sparkes. "I am sure he has a higher opinion of himself than his sister has of herself. Mrs. Wreathock is already on very friendly terms with Mrs. Dines, who has seen her to her cabin, and I dare say is insisting upon waiting on her. The Major there has not noticed

Mrs. Dines. He seems to notice nobody. Yes, he may exchange a word or two with members of his own sex, but there might not be a lady passenger on board if one was to form conclusions by his behavior."

"It is a little soon," said Miss de la Taste. "People of distinction are always languid and wary at the beginning. As they are both honorables they must be the son and daughter of a lord. What is the title, do you know?"

"I have not heard," answered Miss Sparkes. "Is he a married man?"

"I have a fancy that he is a widower," answered Miss de la Taste; "but I really couldn't tell you what puts it into my head."

"Mrs. Wreathock does not show many traces of grief."

"There might not have been much love lost."

"How aristocratic blood asserts itself!" said Miss Sparkes. "One could pick out Mrs. Wreathock in a crowd at a glance as a member of the aristocracy."

"Don't be shocked," said Miss de la Taste. "I am going to ask the steward for a little drop of brandy-and-water. With me it is only the first step that costs. I shall be all right in a few hours."

The tug let fall the hawser of the *Southern Cross* and swept round up Channel, with the captain waving his hand, on his paddle-box, to the outward-bound ship. A Deal boat that had been towing astern hauled alongside, the pilot dropped into her, and the

little craft sailed away for Dover harbor. The breeze was fresh, and it was a fair wind for the ship's course. All plain sail was heaped on the vessel, and she rushed, bowing, over the waters of the Channel with a speed that drew very close to steam, as steam then went. The white foam flashed from her bows; it streamed after her in a broad and dazzling race; the windy sunshine whitened the stirless, distended canvas into the gleaming softness of silk; the line of coast to starboard went dimming away into blue faintness as the ship drew out; but as the afternoon advanced the wind continued to freshen, with a trifling shift to the southward, and first the royals came in, and then the main-sail was rolled up, and then the fore and mizzen top-gallant sails with sundry triangular canvas were furled; and by dinner-time that evening, when the lamps were shining in the cuddy, and when the stewards were staggering on rounded shanks about the tables, the *Southern Cross* was rolling and pitching on a high Channel sea.

But the gale was abaft the beam, and the ship's flight before it was noble and inspiriting; she raised foam to the catheads as she stooped her massive bows, and the roaring fabric of her masts and rigging, with their narrow bands of canvas full of thunder, swung with stately oscillations under a sky along which the scud was pouring like smoke, though it left the dance of stars brilliant enough to fling a delicate sheen upon the night, and to enable Sparshot, his mates, and the

fellows stationed on the forecastle to keep a bright lookout, and to see a mile or two ahead of them.

On this day very few sat down to dinner. The Major was one of them. He made an excellent repast, and proved himself the best sailor of all the passengers, fresh as some of them were from three months of ocean-going. Mrs. Dines kept her cabin. In fact, none of the ladies showed themselves. The stewardess was full of business, and the most sea-sick of all the people was Mrs. Dines's maid Pittar.

Well, it blew strong all the way down Channel, and the gale drove the *Southern Cross* with reefed topsails clear of the Scilly Islands before it dropped. Then the ship took a new wind out of the west. With this wind came fine weather, lines of long, blue, glittering seas, with a true Atlantic weight in the heave of them as they heeled the ship till the ruddy light of her copper glowed over the melting head of the surge. The sun shone brightly by day, there was a corner of the moon by night; but it was very cold, and of the ladies Mrs. Dines alone showed her nose on deck. Mrs. Sparkes and Mrs. Eden were still confined to their cabins, but Mrs. Wreathock was now feeling a little easier; and the Major, coming out of her berth and meeting the Captain, told him that he expected his sister would be able to rise and move about and enjoy the scene of ship and sea when the vessel had gone clear of the Bay of Biscay.

And it came to pass as the Major had predicted, for

when the ship had been five days "out," as it is called, Sparshot, who stood with a sextant in his hand, waiting with his mates for the sun to allow him to make eight bells, heard his name pronounced by a voice that was peculiarly musical, and on starting and looking round he beheld Mrs. Wreathock leaning upon the arm of her brother. Always when Sparshot viewed Mrs. Wreathock he arrived at the conclusion that he had never seen her look prettier. He thought so now, and he was certain to go on thinking so while she remained on board the *Southern Cross*.

No one would have supposed that she had been confined to her cabin for five days with that most distressing and unbecoming of all sensations, sea-sickness. Her eyes were bright, her lips red, and when she parted them her white teeth glanced like light. A delicate bloom tinged her cheeks, and in the sunshine her reddish-brown hair—as much of it as was visible—as it trembled to the breeze upon her brow, looked as though it had been streaked with a brush dipped in liquid bronze.

"I am truly rejoiced to see you on deck, madam," said Sparshot, eying her with deep admiration and saluting her with one of his very handsomest bows.

She thanked him, and, casting her dark eyes over the ship, she admired aloud the beautiful picture of the speeding fabric. Sometimes the Captain would put his eye to the little telescope affixed to his sextant, but every time he removed his gaze from the re-

flection of the sun he directed it, full of admiration, at Mrs. Wreathock.

"What are you doing with that strange instrument?" she asked.

"The Captain is taking sights—surely you understand, Fanny!" said the Major, somewhat gruffly.

"I do not understand," said Mrs. Wreathock. "You are not very good-tempered this morning, Sebastian. I am sure Captain Sparshot will explain the use of that instrument to me?"

"In a minute, madam," said Sparshot; and putting the sextant to his eye he held it steady for a moment or two, and then called out, "Make eight bells!"

Instantly eight bells was struck on some part of the ship. The Major moved off as though to see who it was that rang the bell.

"What can be the meaning of it all?" cried Mrs. Wreathock, with her pretty face full of wonder and interest.

"It is twelve o'clock by the sun," said the Captain, smiling.

"But twelve o'clock is not the right time," she exclaimed, pulling out and looking at a small gold watch.

"It is twelve o'clock here," said the Captain; "your watch is twelve o'clock *there*."

"I do not understand," said she.

"If you are really interested in the art of naviga-

tion," exclaimed Sparshot, "I shall feel honored by your allowing me to explain it to you as well as I can."

"You are most kind. Interested!" cried Mrs. Wreathock. "Why, Captain Sparshot, what could be more beautiful and wonderful than the science that enables you to carry this splendid ship full of human beings, all whose lives are in your keeping, over the trackless waste of ocean — and trackless it is," she added, sweeping the water with her fine eyes; "never seeing land for weeks and weeks, and yet arriving at your destination, which may be a mere speck on the map, and not missing it by so much as a mile!"

"No, nor by so much as a quarter of a mile!" exclaimed Captain Sparshot, whose smile of gratification and self-complacency as he listened to the widow's praise of the noble art of navigation was so diverting that Miss de la Taste, who was walking the poop on the other side, was forced to turn her head to conceal her mirth.

"What is the name of that polished instrument in your hand?" inquired Mrs. Wreathock.

"It is called a sextant," said Sparshot; "but I was going to say this: I must now go below and work out the reckoning—that is to say, I must find out in what part of the world the ship has arrived. After lunch, with your leave, I shall be happy to give you a lesson in navigation."

She thanked him, and as she did so Sparshot fancied

that her eyes dwelt with an expression of interest upon his countenance. He went down the poop-ladder on to the quarter-deck and entered his cabin, but before he applied himself to working out his sights, he paused a moment or two before a square of looking-glass.

CHAPTER IV.

A LESSON IN NAVIGATION.

A NUMBER of the passengers assembled at the luncheon-table that day. The hard weather had passed; the brilliant sunshine excited in the mind an imagination of tropic aromas in the breeze; the light of the deep blue radiant sea was in the wind, and the atmosphere of the saloon or cuddy seemed to be tinctured by the silvery azure which came floating in on either hand through the large circular windows in the ship's sides. The breeze was on the beam, the fore-topmast studding-sail had been run aloft, and the vessel, steadied by the pressure of the height of cloths, took the liquid slopes with rhythmic motion, too buoyant and gently regular to be inconvenient.

The conversation ran on twenty commonplace topics; then said the Major, wiping his iron-gray mustache and speaking for the first time:

"What sort of a place is Madeira, do you know, Captain? I've touched at St. Helena, but never at Madeira."

"I was at Madeira once only," said the Captain; "it is many years ago, and I forget the place."

"Funchal's the name of its town, I think," said the Major. "Has it a harbor?"

"No, sir," answered Sparshot, "you anchor off Funchal in the open sea."

"How do ships manage when it comes on to blow?" said the Major.

"Why, there are many ways of managing, I dare say," answered the Captain, laughing.

"It ain't dangerous to lay off Madeery, is it?" inquired Mrs. Dines.

"Bless me, no, ma'am," said the Captain. "Suppose an inshore gale; the island isn't so big but that a man can't find room to ratch clear of it. No cause to be alarmed, Mrs. Dines; and, besides, how many fathoms d'ye think I mean to bring up in?"

"Well, Capting," said Mrs. Dines, "I've always heard, and I shall always say, that the ship you are in command of is the safest on the seas."

"Only think, Mrs. Dines!" exclaimed Mrs. Wreathock, with her gentle manner and in her soft voice, "Captain Sparshot has been good enough to promise to teach me navigation."

"I suppose," exclaimed the Major, "that there's pretty good holding-ground off Madeira for a ship's anchor, even if it should come on to blow hard?"

"I've never heard any complaint of the anchorage," answered the Captain.

"What was you saying about navigation and Captain Sparshot, Mrs. Wreathock?" exclaimed Mrs. Dines.

"Mrs. Wreathock doesn't quite understand how I find out what o'clock it is by the sun, and I've prom-

ised to explain," said Sparshot, addressing Mrs. Dines, but talking at Major Stopford-Creake.

But the Major appeared to have sunk into a brown study. His eyes were rooted upon a glass of marsala which he mechanically revolved by its stem. You might have supposed that he had been visited by some uneasy fancy about the anchorage off Madeira. Indeed, Mr. Winthrop was so convinced of this that he exclaimed, good-naturedly, "I do not remember ever having heard of a ship being blown ashore at Madeira." The Major took no notice.

Meanwhile Mrs. Dines, Sparshot, and Mrs. Wreathock conversed, the other passengers chatting among themselves.

"Where's Mrs. Wreathock going to learn her lesson?" asked Mrs. Dines.

"On deck, or at this table when the cloth is removed, if the lady pleases," replied Sparshot, looking at Mrs. Wreathock.

"But is it not necessary that I should see the instruments you use? Else how shall I understand your explanations?" said Mrs. Wreathock, smiling.

"What are the instruments?" inquired Mrs. Dines; and the two ladies fastened their eyes upon Sparshot, who answered:

"Why, as to instruments, there's but a sextant that I know of, unless you choose to call the chronometer an instrument."

"What is a chronometer?" inquired Mrs. Wreathock.

Captain Sparshot stared a moment at her, as though wondering whether she were in earnest, then answered, "A chronometer is a clock."

"*I* knew that," said Mrs. Dines.

"A peculiar sort of clock, I suppose?" exclaimed Mrs. Wreathock.

"The very best sort of clock that artists in clocks can put together," responded Sparshot.

"Is it used in navigation?" asked Mrs. Wreathock.

Sparshot smiled. "It is Greenwich time, madam. Without a chronometer we should have to depend for our longitude upon dead reckoning; which reminds me that the reel-log is another instrument which must be shown to you if you want to understand the business of the sailor."

"You interest me greatly, Captain Sparshot," said Mrs. Wreathock. "You must really let me see your chronometer. You will ridicule my ignorance, but I assure you that though I have seen the word 'chronometer' in print—perhaps in a dictionary; I know not where—I never before knew that it signified a clock."

"You will have to step into my cabin to see my chronometer," exclaimed the Captain. "I have three of them. They are delicate pieces of machinery, and I never suffer them to be moved on any account whatever."

"Have you ever seen a chronometer?" said Mrs. Wreathock to Mrs. Dines.

"I cannot say that I ever took notice of one," answered Mrs. Dines, "but I dare say I've seen them in jewellers' windows without recognizing them as such."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Wreathock, timidly, "Captain Sparshot will take you and me into his cabin and show us his chronometers?"

"Most happy, indeed," said Captain Sparshot; and, beckoning with a square forefinger to one of the stewards, he leaned back in his chair, and in a whisper bade the fellow go to his cabin and see that it was all clear for the reception of a couple of ladies.

Major Stopford-Creake rose from his seat, and sauntered through the saloon door onto the quarter-deck. He was followed by others of the passengers. Etiquette does not govern the luncheon and the dinner-table at sea as on land. When you have eaten you go, ladies or no ladies. So it used to be, certainly, and so it still is, I believe.

Presently the Captain left his chair and walked to his cabin, followed by Mrs. Dines and Mrs. Wreathock. He held open the door of the berth, smiling continuously, being much amused and much gratified by Mrs. Wreathock's interest in his professional duties, by her engaging ignorance, and by her fascinating inquisitiveness; and the two ladies entered the berth.

It was a large cabin—the words "cabin" and "berth" are interchangeable; but berth strictly means sleeping-room on board ship, and cabin a living-room. It was, I say, a large cabin, situated, as I have elsewhere said,

on the port or left-hand side of the forward end of the saloon, and confronted by the first and second mates' berths. It was lighted by a large circular window in the ship's side, and by two square windows which overlooked the quarter-deck. Sparshot swung in a cot when he went to bed, but this cot had been removed by the steward, rolled up, and stowed away in a corner, and, therefore, to the ladies there was no visible proof that Sparshot ever went to bed at all. In a corner of this sea-room, cleated to the deck, stood a writing-table. A length of mahogany locker was affixed to the side of the bulkhead. In one corner was a chest of drawers, in another corner a washstand: sundry garments, belonging to Sparshot, swung with the movements of the ship from a row of pegs in the bulkhead. The inner wall was embellished by portraits of Mrs. Sparshot, the Captain's wife, and old Mrs. Sparshot, the Captain's mother, and by Captain Sparshot, when he was second mate and had plenty of hair on his head. Other details of the furniture of the Captain's cabin comprised a bag of charts, a very handsome telescope on brackets, divers mathematical instruments, an official log-book, a collection of volumes, and so forth; and immediately opposite the door, securely fastened to the deck, stood a massive safe.

Mrs. Wreathock gazed about her with many marks of interest, but Mrs. Dines had on several occasions visited the Captain's cabin, and she appeared to see nothing worth looking at.

"Forgive my curiosity, Captain Sparshot," said Mrs. Wreathock; "but—pray where do you sleep?"

"I hang myself up on those hooks when I go to bed," said the Captain, smiling, and adjusting his hair with one hand, while he pointed to the upper deck or ceiling with the other; then, with an admiring countenance, he explained that he slept in a cot; and he begged Mrs. Wreathock to draw to the table.

The two ladies drew to the table, and Sparshot forthwith fell to explaining, as intelligibly as his command of words permitted, the meaning of the term navigation. He took a sheet of paper, he sketched ships in various positions, he drew representations of points of land, he marked off distances with a pair of compasses upon a chart; he explained the use of the reel-log, discoursed on the mariners' compass; explained how the antagonism of head winds was to be defeated, and, taking up his sextant, tried his best to make the ladies understand how he managed to discover what o'clock it was at noon, and how, by that same instrument, a man could find out where he was in the dead of night by shooting a star with it, or pointing it at the moon.

Mrs. Wreathock listened with flattering attention. It was not to be supposed that she could understand everything the Captain said, but her murmurs and nods, backed by the fixed regard of her fine, dark, liquid eyes, assured Sparshot that she followed him with intelligence. On the other hand, Mrs. Dines

once or twice smothered a yawn, and her little, inexpressive eyes wandered often from the paper or chart which Sparshot overhung with a red and grinning face.

Presently the Captain lifted the lid of a mahogany locker, and exposed three boxes, most carefully packed in horse-hair, one of which he opened.

"That's what we call a chronometer," said he.

Mrs. Wreathock inclined her pretty face to view it, then pulling out her watch, exclaimed, "The clock is wrong!"

"I hope not," exclaimed the Captain; "the time that you see there is the hour at Greenwich."

"I never could understand what they calls difference of time," exclaimed Mrs. Dines. "When it's one o'clock in Sydney why ain't it one o'clock in London?"

"Didn't I explain?" said Sparshot; "but your attention wasn't with me. It was there," said he, pointing to the iron safe.

"Why there?" exclaimed Mrs. Wreathock, drawing away from the chronometer over which she had been bending. "Oh, I remember! You told me that Captain Sparshot had charge of your wonderful necklace."

"I'll venture to say," exclaimed Captain Sparshot, "that Mrs. Wreathock is now capable of explaining to you, Mrs. Dines, why it is impossible that it should be one o'clock at Sydney when it is one o'clock in London."

"I do not care to know," said Mrs. Dines. "To tell you the truth, Capting Sparshot, I am sick of the subject, and did not think when I came here that your explanations would run to such great lengths. It is not the business of a woman to learn what's only proper for men to know. If women meddles with the works of man, what's to become of him? Mrs. Wreathock, would you like to see my jewelry?"

Mrs. Wreathock's eyes glistened, and her face instantly lighted up.

"How can you ask me such a question, Mrs. Dines? What can be more heavenly than precious stones? I am never tired of looking at and admiring good jewelry."

"Am I to show them, Mrs. Dines?" said Captain Sparshot, a little sullenly, for he could not immediately recover the effect produced upon his mind by Mrs. Dines's blunt speech.

"Certainly!" said Mrs. Dines; "they was only bought to show."

On this the Captain, putting his hand in his pocket, produced a small bunch of keys, with one of which he opened a narrow drawer placed between two larger drawers in the table on which he had been explaining the art of navigation to the ladies. And from this little drawer he took two keys. These keys he applied to the safe and pulled open the massive iron door. The safe was divided by a shelf, and both the upper and the lower compartments were stocked with

parcels, some of them brown paper, sealed, others of white tissue-paper, and here and there was a dark morocco or plain leather or velvet case, its owner not having gone to the trouble of wrapping it up.

"Do all these parcels and cases contain jewelry?" inquired Mrs. Wreathock.

"A good many of them do," answered the Captain, beginning to grope among the contents in the lower part of the safe. "There's a deal of jewelry belonging to Mrs. du Boulay here, and some belonging to Mrs. Sparkes, and a few trifles to Mrs. Eden. What's worth least occupies most room, of course."

"I brought very little jewelry with me," said Mrs. Wreathock, glancing at her fingers, on which were her wedding-ring and two or three other rings, one of which sparkled. "A friend of mine, Lady Horatia Craven, who is very fond of travelling by sea, advised me to leave my jewelry at home. Much of it has been long in the family, and some of it I should be very, very sorry indeed to lose," she added, with a sigh.

"Her ladyship advised you wisely," said Sparshot. "I wish most lady passengers were as sensibly prompted. It would be saving us masters a good deal of responsibility. Why, I dare say there's a matter of forty thousand pounds' worth, and perhaps more, locked up here. . . . Yes, I knew that I had the diamonds at the back; here they are," and he brought out a flat, circular parcel about the size of a dinner-plate. He placed the parcel in the hands of Mrs.

Dines, who, opening the paper, that was unsealed, took out a case, the lid of which leaped to the pressure of her thumb, and disclosed a necklace of magnificent diamonds.

Magnificent they were! One stone, called the "Light of the Age," famous not only for size but for all other perfections of color and quality, shone like a little moon in the circle of glorious stars which it linked at the part that, when the necklace was worn, rested upon the throat. Mrs. Wreathock uttered a single exclamation of pleasure, and then viewed the necklace in silence.

"Would you like to have it in your hands?" said Mrs. Dines.

"No, let it rest. It could not show more beautifully than as it lies," answered Mrs. Wreathock.

"And worth hard upon twenty-three thousand pounds," exclaimed Sparshot, as though thinking aloud. "Well, give me a quarter of its value in cash, and I'd set up ashore, and my friends would never hear of me at sea again. Bless me, ladies! but isn't it sinful to waste all the good money those stones represent by locking it up as it were in a bit of a velvet case? What happiness for multitudes in the worth of one of those stones alone."

"People have their whims," said Mrs. Dines; "and mine's diamonds."

"The whim for jewels must have a famishing appetite if it's not to be appeased by such gems as

those," said the Captain. "What do you think of them, Mrs. Wreathock?"

Her eyes, which were as bright as the diamonds, had been fastened upon the necklace as it lay in the case in Mrs. Dines's hand; but when Sparshot addressed her she withdrew her gaze from the jewels, and looked at him with a smile.

"Of course, I must envy Mrs. Dines," she answered; "she is the owner of the loveliest thing I have ever seen in my life. And yet—" she paused, smiling at Mrs. Dines with something of embarrassment in her expression.

"I believe I can guess what is in your mind, madam," said Captain Sparshot. "You are secretly agreeing with me that three-and-twenty thousand pounds—only think! three-and-twenty thousand pounds," he repeated, slowly and emphatically, "is a sight too much money to lock up in an ornament, seeing what the needs of the world are."

Mrs. Dines snapped to the lid of her case. "I don't want to hear any sermins, Capting Sparshot. I like them as little as I do your navigation, as you calls it," said she. "I know your views; I don't object to them. On the contrary, if I didn't know you to be a humane man I shouldn't be here. I suppose there are poor folks in Sydney as there are elsewhere, and I believe," she continued, with a little toss of her head, "that me and Mr. Dines aren't considered less charitable than our neighbors."

"Captain Sparshot has not exactly expressed my thoughts," said Mrs. Wreathock. "Indeed, I do not agree with him. People have a perfect right to spend their money as they choose. Besides, I have heard my poor husband say that money spent in diamonds is often well invested. Suppose diamonds should rise in value, Captain Sparshot. Mrs. Dines might be able to get thirty thousand pounds for what she paid twenty-three thousand for. What profit would that make? Seven thousand pounds. Mrs. Dines, on a profit of seven thousand pounds you could afford to be as bountiful to the poor as even Captain Sparshot could wish."

"Lor'! but I wish I could talk as well as you, Mrs. Wreathock," said Mrs. Dines. "But there's your answer, Capting Sparshot, anyway."

The Captain felt that he had said enough, and gazed in silence at Mrs. Dines.

"You paused in your speech, Mrs. Wreathock," said Mrs. Dines, "and Capting Sparshot misrepresented you. Now, what was you about to say?"

"Oh, merely this. That beautiful as your necklace is, far more beautiful than anything of the sort that ever I have seen, my first impression is one of disappointment. But why? Probably because the description you gave me of the necklace, and the price you told me you had paid for it, caused me to create an ideal necklace, something to the fancy more rich and splendid than perhaps anything that is to be found on

earth. If the necklace were mine, or if I were to see it often, its true worth would steal in upon me. I should understand its real magnificence, and find it grander than the imagination of it which your description excited." She turned with a charming smile to Captain Sparshot, who stood listening with admiring attention. "Some author—perhaps you will be able to give me his name, Captain Sparshot—"

"I am sorry to say—" interrupted Sparshot, stammering; "but let's hear what the gentleman did; perhaps I may know him."

"He did nothing. He merely made a remark which bears out what I have said about Mrs. Dines's necklace. He went to view Niagara Falls, and he said that at the first glance he was disappointed. He had expected to see more water; to hear a more wonderful sound of thunder; but he had not stood looking long when the reality grew upon him, and then he witnessed a majesty far greater than ever his imagination could have put before him, though that imagination had been the cause of his immediate disappointment."

"Lor', Mrs. Wreathock, what would I give to be able to talk like you! Yes, I'd give this necklace, I would indeed," said Mrs. Dines, handing the parcel to Captain Sparshot, who replaced it in his safe.

Captain Sparshot, having replaced the jewels in his safe, carefully locked the massive iron door, put the keys into the drawer whence he had taken them,

locked the drawer, and pocketed the bunch of keys to which the key of the drawer was attached. Mrs. Wreathock thanked him for the entertainment his discourse on navigation had provided her with, and she also thanked Mrs. Dines for allowing her to view the magnificent necklace. She then asked that lady to accompany her for a turn on deck, and they both quitted the Captain's cabin, Sparshot holding open the door, and bowing low rather in the direction of Mrs. Wreathock than of Mrs. Dines, as the ladies stepped forth.

CHAPTER V.

OFF FUNCHAL.

From the latitude of about 44° N., which fairly indicates the situation of the ship when such of the passengers as were sea-sick found themselves better and appeared on deck, down to the latitude of about 34°, the *Southern Cross* met with nothing but genial weather—with skies which every day brightened into a clearer azure, with fresh and favorable winds which every day grew warmer, with a sun whose heat, when he had fairly climbed over the foreyard, demanded the shelter of the awning.

Captain Sparshot had no doubt whatever that his ship would be at anchor off Funchal well within the ten days which he had named to Major Stopford-Creake.

Nothing in any way noteworthy happened. Sometimes a ship steamed or sailed past, and the ladies would be entertained by an interesting display of signal flags. The deck quoit was introduced, and the harmless sport of heaving it formed the chief diversion of Mr. Winthrop, Miss de la Taste, and the two Miss Sparkeses. The Major was reserved; he professed to dislike cards, and could never be coaxed into

taking a hand; he was somewhat short in his answers; spoke little at the table, had next to nothing to say even to the Captain himself, and was generally disliked, but not despised; on the contrary, the person he condescended to accost usually felt flattered, and the more he held aloof the more wistful grew the secret respect of his fellow-passengers; but behind his back he was called a snob by the men, and a stuck-up, conceited person by the women.

But his sister made amends for his disagreeable behavior. She was kind and gentle with all; Mrs. Dines declared she had never met with a more lovable woman, and the stewardess told Pittar that in all her time —and she had spent some years at sea, and attended upon many people—she had never had "to do" with so interesting, polished, and perfect a lady. Sparshot paid her marked attention. Every captain of an ocean-going passenger vessel has a favorite lady passenger. It is true selections of this sort are not wise; jealousy is excited, and murmurs will be heard; but, as a rule, the saloon accepts the captain's favorite lady passenger as a detail of ocean routine, as an inevitable condition of getting from one part of the world to another. Sparshot's favorite was the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock, and even Miss de la Taste could not deny that the charming young widow's social position justified in the behavior of Sparshot a degree of respect and attention which ought not to be looked for in him by people who, though their families might be

never so old—and it is needless to say, perhaps, that Miss de la Taste went back to the Conquest—were not members of the aristocracy.

Mrs. Wreathock, having received one lesson in navigation, was so well pleased that she asked for more; and until the weather changed, and until it came on to blow when Madeira was still some two or three degrees to the southward, she was often with the Captain in his cabin, hearkening to him with flattering interest while he discoursed on the uses to which the mariner put the sun, moon, and stars. It will not, of course, be supposed that on these occasions she was alone with Sparshot. Once Mrs. du Boulay was her companion, another time it might be the elder Miss Sparkes, or on a third visit she would be attended by Mrs. Eden; Mrs. Dines, however, could not be induced to attend again.

The interest that Mrs. Wreathock took in listening to the Captain's explanations of the art of navigation naturally caused some talk at first; but gossip was silenced by the assurance of the ladies who accompanied the widow, that Sparshot's remarks and illustrations were extremely instructive and amusing; and that they all hoped, long before they were up with the Cape, to know as much about the science of conducting a ship through the ocean as Mr. Parr, the chief officer, or Mr. Sampson, the second mate.

By this time it was known that Major the Honorable Sebastian Stopford-Creake was the second son of

the late Lord Horncastle, who had married twice, having by his second wife Fanny, whose husband, Julius Wreathock, had held a commission in a crack regiment. This discovery had been made by Mr. Winthrop while smoking a cigar one evening under the break of the poop. He had been joined by Major Stopford-Creake, who, after praising some claret that had been put upon the table at dinner, seem disposed to be communicative. One topic of conversation led to another, and before the two gentlemen's cigars were smoked out Mr. Winthrop was in possession of the Major's family history.

Captain Sparshot proved to be very much out in his calculation of ten days to Madeira. When the *Southern Cross* was within two days' sail of the island it came on to blow strong from the southward—right in the ship's teeth, in short—which compelled the skipper to slant away for Madeira, first on one tack, and then on the other, under reduced canvas, with sobbing scuppers, and the weather side of the fore-castle dark and gleaming with the spray that burst over the bow as the brave ship shouldered the hard, green surge, sweeping it into dim rainbows to the watery winking of the sun amid the breaks of the flying vapor on high.

In fact, it was not until the dawn of a day that brought the time to sixteen days from the date of the ship's departure from Gravesend that the island of Madeira hove into view, right on a line with the

Southern Cross's flying jib-boom end. The ship was then pitching over a high swell, with square yards and a main-royal set, doing some eight knots in the hour, so that all hands might reckon on having Funchal abreast by three or four o'clock in the afternoon.

The appearance of land somewhat excited the passengers. When they came up after breakfast, and beheld the blue mass of Madeira and the dim blotches of the adjacent rocks right ahead, they stared as though they had kept the sea for years.

"One can tell how dull and monotonous travelling by ocean is," said Mrs. Wreathock to Mrs. Dines, as they stood together looking at the land, "by the refreshing break the sight of that island makes."

"Dull it is," said Mrs. Dines, "and dull you'll find it before we gets to Sydney. I ought to have taken steam. Contrairy winds don't signify when you have steam. Not that I'm in a hurry. Dines knows where I am, and a right-minded husband can never ask more of his wife. It's the doctor's doing. My physician, Dr. Tankard, is the cleverest gentleman of his calling in all Australia, and he wouldn't let me off under nine months. 'Doctor,' I says, 'surely, going to England in a sailing ship and returning in a steamer 'll be enough?' 'No, Mrs. Dines,' he says, 'I know your constitution, and have made a study of you. Nine months, if you please, or fatty degeneration, which is a 'eart trouble.' Shall you go ashore at Madeery?"

Mrs. Wreathock answered that unless the ship were detained for some days she should not go ashore. She hated excursions which lasted a few hours only. They were merely tantalizing, and left no other impression than disappointment.

"You'll give me the pleasure of your company ashore?" said Mrs. Dines. "Even if the ship don't stop longer than an hour I'd go, if only for the sake of sitting in an arm-chair that doesn't rock, and walking on ground that ain't continuously sloping first this way and then that."

The swell sank as the ship neared the island, the breeze blew languidly; but the *Southern Cross* had a clipper run, and by lunch-time the island lay clearly distinguishable by the naked eye; many points of its rich and fertile beauty visible, with a black electric cloud spitting fire over one corner of it, while the sunlight flashed up the vapor that crawled about other parts, as though the island were a volcanic heap and steam were breaking from its summits. Softly and steadily the *Southern Cross* floated onward to the impulse of her wide-spread pinions, for Sparshot, anxious to bring up before sundown, had sent his studding-sails aloft, and the ship was clothed from water-way to truck with gleaming cloths swelling and sinking like breathing breasts far beyond the sides of the vessel.

Major Stopford-Creake stood at the rail, where he commanded a good view of the island. He grasped

the handsome telescope that belonged to Captain Sparshot, and constantly raised and held it steady at his eye, gazing with something of a thirsty expression of countenance, as though the spectacle of the beautiful island was gradually impassioning his desire to get ashore, and behold closely the loveliness that appeared to enchant him at a distance. Suddenly he let sink the telescope and looked around at his sister, who stood by the side of some ladies.

She approached him with a careless air and, pausing beside him, murmured, "Do you see her?"

He answered "Yes" in a low voice; then, raising his tones, bade her admire the vivid verdure of the island, and the contrast of the manifold rich colors of the whole mass with the light-blue surface of the brine that steeped to the base of the rocks. He then held the telescope for her to look through, pointing it at the town of Funchal, the ivory-like structures of which had by this time risen above the horizon and were hovering upon the sea-line, resembling, to an eye gazing from the poop of the *Southern Cross*, the head of a short scope of breaker in the act of dissolving into foam. Mrs. Wreathock looked through the glass, and while she looked her lips moved softly with the delivery of a few sentences inaudible to the two or three people who were standing near. She then returned to the ladies she had quitted, and pointed to the beauties of the island with an animation which heightened the color in her cheeks, and which

fired her eyes with a brightness that was not to be witnessed in the most brilliant of the gems which flashed upon the fingers of Mrs. Dines.

There were four or five vessels lying off Funchal. One was a British man-of-war, a fine steam corvette, which, as the *Southern Cross* approached, got her anchor and slowly steamed away into the south-east, the crimson cross fluttering at her peak, her yards braced to a hair, her glossy sides reflecting the rippling lustre in the water, and the gilt about her stern and quarters discharging a red and sulky flash at the westering sun as though a gun had been fired there. The vessels which remained at anchor were small craft—a bark of some three hundred tons, a clumsy bit of a brigantine deep laden, an old hulk that in its day, for all one could tell, might have been one of the smartest of the Honorable East India Company's ships; and not far from the hulk lay a steam-yacht, a craft of about a hundred and forty tons, heavily rigged as a schooner, with a yellow funnel close abaft the foremast.

The *Southern Cross* drove slowly into the bay with her canvas clewing up, hands aloft rolling up the lighter sails, her decks lively with the running figures of seamen and of steerage passengers willing to help and getting very much in the way of the sailors, and the air was noisy with the "yeo heave-hoing" which the merchant Johnny finds a pleasure in bawling from the depths of his leathern lungs whenever an

order from the poop or quarter-deck gives him an excuse for singing out. Sparshot, aft, delivered his commands with sailorly vehemence and swiftness, and equally sailorly were the orders given by Mr. Parr, the chief officer, who stood upon the forecastle superintending the ground-tackle, and seeing all ready for letting go the anchor. Then, when everybody had been told to stand clear of the chain cable, the anchor was let go: it fell with a mighty plunge, and the chain roared in the hawse-pipe as the links were torn through it by the vast weight of iron.

In a few minutes the *Southern Cross* had swung, had tautened her cable, and was lying quietly at rest, softly swaying upon the summer heave of the waters flowing in a delicate swell into the bay.

But though the ship rested quietly, her decks were clamorous. A number of boats had gathered alongside, and many repulsive-looking, tawny people, a number of them in rags and tatters, yet all of them bearing commodities for sale, had dexterously crept over the rail, while alongside were crowds of nude boys screaming up to the ship in barbarous English for people to throw money into the sea that they might dive. Major Stopford-Creake stood at the head of the starboard poop-ladder looking down at the boats that were clustered about the gangway. The captain had disappeared. An agent had arrived on board, and there was business to be transacted below. The passengers moved about the poop staring at the

island, or at the ugly curiosity dealers who had come off to the ship from it. The main-deck was full of people; everybody was in motion, and everybody seemed to be talking or laughing.

Suddenly the Major, with a smile of recognition, descended the poop-ladder, and, making his way through the people who were congregated upon the quarter-deck, advanced to the gangway, in which stood a man who only a minute before had arrived alongside in a boat.

This man was dressed in seafaring clothes, and was undoubtedly a sailor. He wore a naval peak to his cap, a monkey-jacket, blue cloth trousers, and canvas shoes. His face was heavy and coarse, his lower lip was underhung, and revealed a few stumps of tobacco-blackened teeth; his jaws were square, he was without hair on his face, and his flesh looked as though it had been stained with strawberry-juice. He had the aspect of a prize-fighter. He was even more broadly and firmly set upon his legs than Captain Sparshot; but his gaze was steadfast, direct, and singularly honest.

He stood at the gangway staring about him; but on seeing Major Stopford-Creake he smiled and respectfully touched his cap.

"Well, Captain Brine, here we are at last!" said the Major.

"Yes, sir; glad to see you," answered Brine, in a strong, salt voice; "it's bin a pretty middling long passage to the island, h'ant it?"

"Head winds; nothing but head winds for the last few days," answered the Major, whose manner of addressing Brine was much more easy and familiar than his manner of addressing his fellow-passengers.

"She's a fine vessel," exclaimed Brine, looking up at the towering height of mast and along the decks of the ship. "I noticed her bows and run as I came along. A cool twelve with a top-gallant breeze and anything like smooth water, I'll warrant. It may prove a job, and so I tell ye straight, sir."

"We must take our chance," said the Major, after a pause, looking thoughtfully at the man Brine, whom he had called captain, and then sending a swift, keen glance up at the poop as though he would see whether he was observed.

But the passengers were busy with the curiosity dealers, or occupied in looking over the side watching the dingy-skinned lads diving and quarrelling. Everybody was engaged in chatting and laughing. Mrs. Wreathock and Mrs. Dines stood at the aftermost end of the poop viewing the land. The mates moved here and there, seeing the ship snug and everything right for the night. It was now about a quarter to six o'clock, and dinner would not be served in the saloon till half-past six. The rich light of the sunset was in the air, and every point of beauty submitted by the island gathered a fresh accentuation of loveliness from the splendors of the western sky. The wreaths of vapor creeping about the mountain brows were flush-

ed with a pink tincture, and the stare of the white houses of the town was softened by the orange-hued atmosphere that slept upon their seaward-looking faces, for now all the wind was gone, and the water rolled, gleaming, with silk-like smoothness, to the land.

"Where's the lady, sir?" inquired Brine, directing a look of curiosity at such of the passengers as were visible.

"She was on deck not long ago," answered the Major, rising on his toes the better to command the length of the poop, which, as you know, is a raised deck. "I don't see her. But no matter. I shall be introducing you to her before long, Captain Brine, I hope."

"There is a good spread of mizzen channel, sir," said Brine. "I obsarved *that* as I came along. It's lucky. It will give the lady a first-rate chance. Without them platforms you'd find it 'ud come tidy awkward for her, and maybe a bit awkward for yourself, sir," he added, casting a glance over the figure of the Major.

"Well, Captain Brine, here you are, and my mind is at rest. I have been anxious. I have thought to myself, 'Suppose when we arrive Captain Brine should not be here.' But here you are: so all's well so far. I will not offer you anything."

"Thank you kindly; I require nothing, sir. Best not stop too long aboard perhaps. I shall pull for the shore when I go, so there can be no guessing, you see.

Thought I'd come and report myself, sir. The arrangements, of course, stand as they were?"

"Exactly as they were," said the Major. "The signal agreed upon is the signal to be made. Keep a sharp lookout, Captain Brine, and don't fail me."

"I'll not be failing ye, sir," exclaimed Brine, with a note of heartiness in his voice. "But of course ye'll contrive that the signal's made at a hopportunity which won't give me an excuse *for* failing ye."

On this the Major addressed some sentences to him in a very low voice, and Captain Brine nodded continuously as he listened. When the Major had ended Brine said:

"That's as it was agreed, and you leave me alone not to make a mistake, sir. Only ye must remember that at sea weather's weather—"

"I must take my chance," interrupted the Major, uttering these words for the second time.

"As I was saying," continued Brine, "weather's weather at sea in a way that it ain't weather ashore. That's to be allowed for. I must say," he went on, directing another groping look, so to speak, at the passengers who were on the poop, "that I should have liked to catch just one sight of the lady afore I go. Well, I wish your honor good-afternoon. I don't know, I am sure, how long ye'll be detained here. But I dare say what the ship is come for will be letting her get her anchor up by to-morrow evening."

With a final look in the direction of the poop, Cap-

tain Brine touched his cap and, descending the gangway ladder, entered a dingy rowed by a single pair of oars, and the Major stood in the gangway watching with a thoughtful face the little boat as she pulled in the direction of Funchal.

CHAPTER VI.

A FRESH START.

Shortly after Major Stopford-Creake left the gangway, where he had stood watching the small dingy containing Captain Brine making in the direction of Funchal, Captain Sparshot, accompanied by a gentleman, came out of the saloon, descended the ladder, and entering the boat was rowed with his companion to the island. But apparently nobody else belonging to the ship had gone ashore. At the dinner-hour all the passengers assembled as usual at the tables, and the only difference in the old arrangement was that Mr. Parr, the chief officer, occupied the Captain's chair, while the second mate, Mr. Sampson, took Mr. Parr's seat.

Mrs. Wreathock dwelt with delight upon the beauties of the Island of Madeira as beheld from the sea.

"I deeply deplore," she exclaimed, gazing at Mr. Parr with eyes that seemed to swim, "that my dear husband did not carry out his resolution of wintering in this lovely spot. The climate might have saved his life."

"How long is the ship going to stop here?" said Mrs. Dines.

"I certainly hope we shall be able to get away to-morrow afternoon," answered Mr. Parr. "The wine should be alongside early in the morning, and it is not going to be in such quantity, I hope, as to occupy us all day in swinging it aboard."

"Does the Captain sleep ashore?" inquired the Major.

"No, sir," responded the mate.

"I am glad to hear it," said the Major. "A master of a vessel has no business to leave his ship all night —I mean a ship situated as the *Southern Cross* is, with nothing to depend upon but an anchor or two and, perhaps, a defective chain, should a gale spring up."

"Mr. Parr has a master's certificate," said Mr. du Boulay.

"So he ought to," said Mrs. Dines. "If I had my way no ship should put to sea with less than three captings. Suppose the only capting of a ship should die or go mad, or lose his sight; what then? There'd be ne'er a navigator in the forecastle; the common sailors would take advantage and rise, and what then, I say?"

She toyed with the coins at her waist, causing the pieces to chatter like sovereigns shovelled on a bank counter, while she looked along the line of faces to observe the effect of her words. Then fixing her eyes on Mrs. Wreathock, she said:

"You'll come ashore with me to-morrow, I hope—you and the Major there. There's a good hotel, I've

heard, and we'll view the sights, see the Portuguee military, and the cathedral, and have a nice little champagne lunch all to ourselves before the ship sails. Lord knows," she added, with energy, "we want some such a change after sixteen days of tossing and tumbling!"

Mrs. Wreathock thanked her in her sweetest manner, and said that she did not think she would go on shore. She did not like the idea of entering a small boat. She did not like the idea of absenting herself from the ship which might sail without her. Other things which she mentioned she did not like the idea of either; and so very prettily, and with an air of perfect good-breeding, she made her excuses to Mrs. Dines, while the other passengers exchanged looks with here and there a half-concealed sneer, one or two of them thinking, perhaps, to emphasize their private opinion of Mrs. Dines by staring at the jewelry she wore.

When dinner was over, everybody went on deck to breathe the soft air. It was a very clear night, the sky was brilliant with stars, under which here and there floated a steam-colored body of vapor which moved so slowly that the motion seemed that of the stars. There would be no moon till nine or ten o'clock. It was a pity that the satellite's magic pencils of light should be wanting, for never does the Island of Madeira show more sweetly, with a more dream-like fairy beauty as it sleeps upon the ocean, than by moonlight, when

its curling vapors are transmuted into silver, and when scintillant wreaths dwell upon the soaring heads of the hills as though they were crowned by some goddess of the deep.

This fine fancy was Mrs. Wreathock's, who softly spoke it to Mrs. Dines while lamenting the tardy approach of the moon.

"I don't know nothing about goddesses," was Mrs. Dines's plain, sober-headed answer. "All I wish is that I was in an 'otel among them lights there—snug in an arm-chair that don't rock, and able to go to bed without being rolled as if you was a cask a-lowering into the cellar of a public-'ouse."

The lights sparkled in a galaxy where the town lay at the base of the dark mass of land. At intervals of silence the voice of the Atlantic breaker, beating along the rocky line of shore, stole through the air in a low note of thunder. Some sailors were singing songs aboard the bark that swayed shadowily at a few cables' length from the *Southern Cross*. Here and there the oars of a boat in motion chipped fire out of the water like sparks from flint; and so smooth was the sea that the reflection of a large and lovely star, shining over the mizzen-top-sail yard-arm, rested like a silver coin in the polished indigo surface, and you might have seen the image of the star stretching and shrinking as though it were a jelly-fish as the noiseless swell underran it.

Major Stopford-Creake, after having paced the deck

with his sister at his side for some twenty minutes or so, left her, and descended to the quarter-deck. He lighted a cigar, and stood smoking in the recess that was formed by the projection of the Captain's cabin on the port side, and the projection of the mates' cabins on the starboard side. The saloon lamps burned brightly, but the interior was empty. The quarter-deck was deserted; there was, however, a crowd of steerage passengers and sailors on the forecastle, and a few people conversed in the dark shadows round about the galley.

After the Major had been smoking for a few minutes, a man came along the deck towards the saloon. When he was within the sheen of the lamp-light flowing through the open door of the saloon, the Major perceived that he was one of the stewards.

"Has the Captain returned?" exclaimed the Major.

"I don't think so, sir; I have not seen him," answered the man.

"I wish to speak to him," said the Major. "See if he is in his cabin."

"He is not likely to be there, sir," said the man; "his cabin's in darkness," he added, making a step to command the forward-looking window of the berth.

"Knock and ascertain," said the Major.

The man did so, and received no answer.

"Try the handle of the door," said the Major.

The man hesitated.

"Try the handle of the door, I tell you," repeated

the Major, in a subdued, but stern and commanding voice.

The man obeyed, and exclaimed, "It is locked, sir."

"Oh!" said the Major, and, tossing his cigar overboard, he went on to the poop.

Captain Sparshot came off to the ship while four bells—ten o'clock—was striking upon her deck. But though the Major was on the poop at the time when Sparshot arrived on board, he did not advance to meet him as a man would who had something very particular to say to a person after whom he had been inquiring. Nor, though he sat with Sparshot at one of the saloon tables until five bells had struck, drinking cold whiskey-and-water, did he once hint at the subject which, an hour or so before, had so weighed upon his mind as to induce him to order an under-steward to try the door of the Captain's berth.

Well, as Mr. Parr had promised or predicted, early next morning a quantity of the wine of the island consigned to Australia came alongside. Mrs. Dines and others of the passengers wished to go ashore. Sparshot regretted to inform them that he feared there would not be time.

"Why," said Mrs. Dines, "you said we was to lie here for two or three days!"

"Everything was in readiness for our arrival," said the Captain. "I had thought to find a slackness ashore. But our long passage has given the people plenty of time. Then, again, how was I to guess the

state of the weather? For all I could have foreseen, we might have been detained here a week waiting for the weather to allow us to ship the goods."

The wine, however, was not got aboard and stowed until after two o'clock in the afternoon; but scarcely had the last of it been passed over the ship's side when the boatswain's cheerful pipe sang through the ship, and in a few minutes twenty powerful throats were roaring out a sea chorus to the accompaniment of the clanking of the windlass, and the gritting noise of links of chain-cable coming slowly in through the rusty hawse-pipe.

It was a gloriously beautiful afternoon; a fine sailing breeze blew out of the north-east, and the water that was filled with the light of the high sun trembled to the whipping of the breeze, and it shone down to its distant opalescent rim as though the sky were a boundless prism whose rich and shifting tints were reflected in it. Never did the Island of Madeira look more beautiful; never did the houses of Funchal gleam with a sharper light of ivory whiteness. Mrs. Dines and those who had wished to go ashore gazed wistfully; but there was nothing to be said; everybody was anxious to get to Sydney, and, therefore, the briefer the detention at Madeira the better, spite of the blow which the promptitude of the shippers had dealt the desires of Mrs. Dines and others of the passengers.

The cable came in smartly: Mr. Parr, standing on the cathead, roared out to Sparshot, "Hove short, sir!"

a number of hands sprang aloft on all three masts, and the windlass was deserted that the top-sails might be sheeted home and the yards mast-headed. Then the windlass was manned afresh, and the anchor lifted out of its bed of ooze, and presently the *Southern Cross* was heading away clear of the island into the south and west, with bladder-like canvas rapidly soaring into symmetric spaces, and with the red ensign of her nation descending from the gaff end, at which it had been flying all the morning.

Shortly after the fine ship had got her anchor and proceeded on her voyage, a schooner-rigged yacht with a yellow funnel—the craft, in short, to which reference has previously been made—manned her windlass and made all sail. Her crew were evidently an active body of fellows; they heaped canvas upon their little ship with a despatch that was almost man-of-war like, and very speedily the steamer was gliding past the island with her head directed a point or two westward of the course pursued by the *Southern Cross.*

The spectacle of a vessel—and of so small a vessel as the steam-yacht—leaving the anchorage much about the time at which the *Southern Cross* started, and steering for the deep solitude of the Atlantic Ocean almost in the direction taken by the Australian liner, naturally excited some interest among Sparshot's passengers.

"Why did she wait for us?" said Mr. Winthrop. "Why didn't she start sooner or later?"

"Perhaps she means to keep us company for the

sake of safety," said Mr. Eden. "She is but a bit of a vessel compared to our ship."

"Maybe she means to race us," exclaimed Mr. du Boulay. "I hope so. There is nothing more interesting than an ocean race. But, Heaven bless me! what chance will she stand if she sticks to her canvas only?" and here Mr. du Boulay gazed up at the spacious spread of sail that was now heeling the *Southern Cross*, and driving her through the water with a line of milky softness behind her, the fan-shaped tail of which seemed to simmer to the very base of the island astern.

"Where do you think she is going?" said Mrs. Dines to the Captain, who stood looking at the yacht.

"Why, perhaps to the West Indies," answered Captain Sparshot; "though if she keeps all on as she now heads her destination will be a Brazilian port."

"You should get your husband to buy you a yacht, Mrs. Dines," said Mrs. Sparkes.

"He ain't well enough off," answered Mrs. Dines; whereat there was a sound of quiet laughing.

"Come and let me take a walk with you," said Mrs. Dines to Mrs. Wreathock, and she passed her hand under the fair young widow's arm as she spoke. "It's charity to give me an excuse to get away from them people. I am as God made me, and, praise the Lord, I am without pretensions. But I hate to be sniggered at. If Dines were here—but he is not here, and so what's the use of wishing. Between you and me and the bedpost, Mrs. Wreathock, I mean to say just

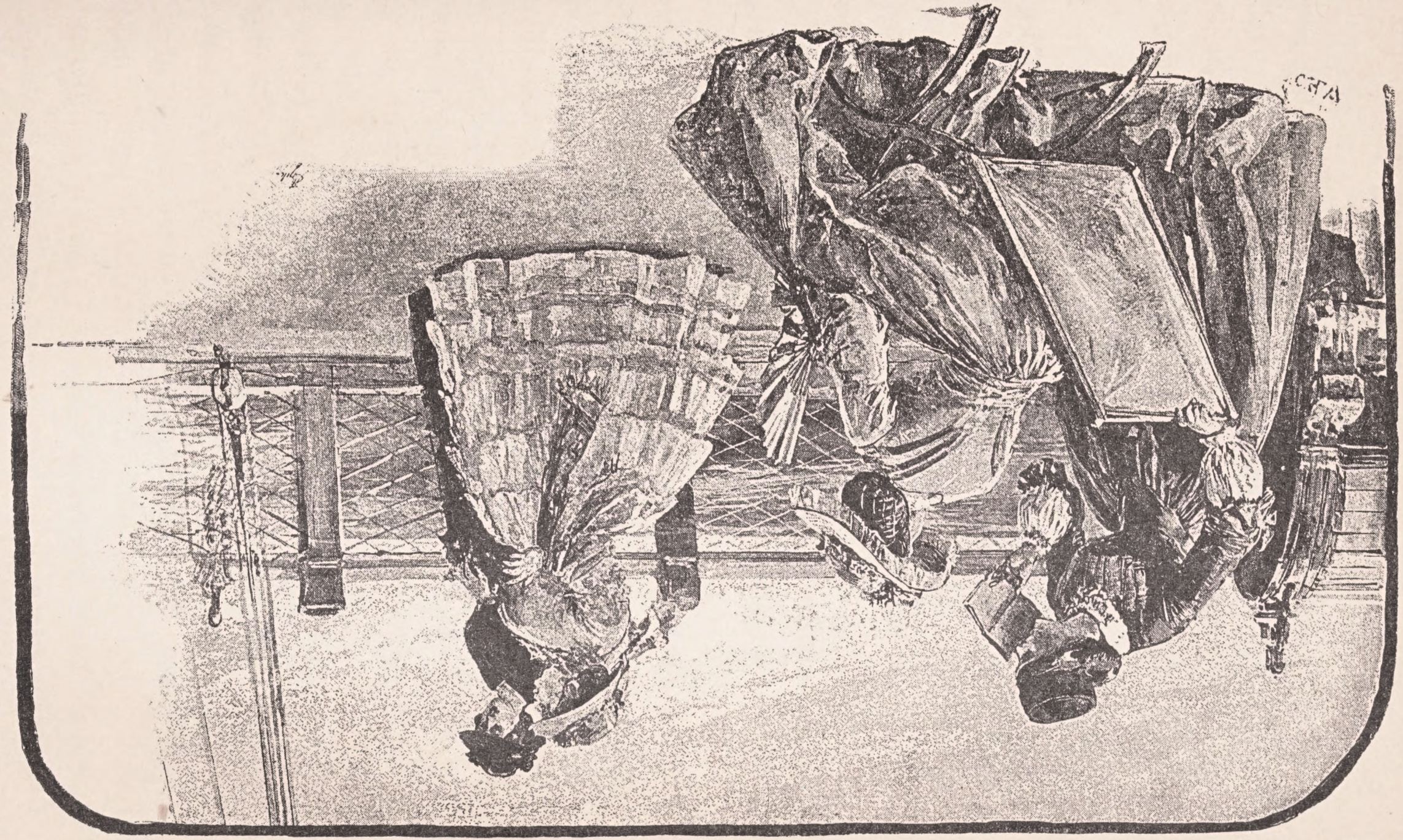
as little as I can possibly help to what I suppose I must call my fellow-passengers."

Mrs. Wreathock replied with some sentences full of sympathy and kindness, and the two ladies paced the deck.

"You see what that vulgar woman is aiming at," softly said Mrs. du Boulay to Miss de la Taste. "There will be a good deal heard of Mrs. Dines's aristocratic friends after we arrive at Sydney, you mark. But I don't think the Major is to be very easily won over by our friend. Do you observe a sort of sneer upon his face as he stands there now at this moment looking at his sister and her companion? I should not be surprised if he obliged Mrs. Wreathock to give Mrs. Dines the cut direct when they have landed. That is how people of breeding usually serve folks of the Dines's sort when they have done with them."

"I can only wonder at Mrs. Wreathock's amiability," said Miss de la Taste.

And now the passengers, having seen as much of the yacht as interested them, broke up and moved here and there, some going below. The Island of Madeira lay in a pale azure heap astern, every feature of the land rapidly dimming in the blue gush of the steady breeze. No more land, as the passengers might suppose, was to heave in sight this side of the Sydney Heads; the vessel had already settled down for her long run half way round the world, and the dull mechanical routine of shipboard, the heavy spirit of mo-



"'YOU SEE WHAT THAT VULGAR WOMAN IS AIMING AT?'"

notony proceeding from the life of the deep, was already to be felt throughout the vessel's length, and witnessed in every visage the eyes encountered—strong in its assertion as though no break of a day and night had happened.

"That yacht seems to have heels, Mr. Parr," said the Captain, stepping up to his chief officer, who stood near Major Stopford-Creake at the forward end of the poop-deck looking at the steamer. "She is making a more westerly course than ourselves, but she has foregathered upon us for all that."

"She shows a tremendous spread of canvas, sir," said Mr. Parr. "I never before saw so long a head to a fore-and-aft main-sail."

"She must be using her engines, don't you think, Captain Sparshot?" exclaimed the Major, approaching the skipper by a stride. "Otherwise it's not to be supposed that a vessel of her size could hold her own with such a ship as this."

"She may have her fires banked," said Sparshot. "I see no smoke. I don't think her engines are working. She will be an auxiliary, I expect."

"That's just what you will find her, sir," said Mr. Parr. "She is not going to drag a propeller along with her, at that rate."

"Is she a private yacht, do you think?" asked the Major.

"She has the look of one," answered the Captain. "She is no trader, anyhow;" and he then changed the

subject by expressing his regret that time had not permitted of his escorting Major Stopford-Creake and Mrs. Wreathock ashore.

By sundown the yacht had run her hull out of sight behind the sea to windward of and directly abreast of the *Southern Cross*—that is, "dead abeam," as sailors would say; but it seemed tolerably clear to those who gave the matter a thought that the yacht, having put herself hull down, had then shifted her helm for a course parallel with that of the Australian liner. For she was visible against the last dim lingering glow of sunset—that is to say, she was visible from about midway the height of her canvas; and she showed in a blot against the rustic tinge of hectic; and her appearance then was no bigger or smaller than it had been for some time, proving that she was steering as the ship steered, and that, if her destination was the West Indies, as Captain Sparshot had suggested, her skipper was several points off his course.

CHAPTER VII.

KEEPING COMPANY.

And now for some days nothing in any degree remarkable occurred; nothing save this—if, indeed, a familiar detail of ocean life can be called remarkable—that before a couple of days had elapsed, dating from the hour of the *Southern Cross's* departure from Madeira, it was to be clearly understood that the steam-yacht, which had weighed shortly after the Australian liner had proceeded, was keeping her company.

There was, as has been said, nothing remarkable in this. In those days, far more often than in these, ships again and again sailed the ocean in pairs. If it happened that two vessels were leaving port at the same time, their captains would agree to keep in sight of each other, and several examples of extraordinary deliverances from frightful perils could be given as illustrations of the usefulness of this sort of neighborly navigation.

In all probability the yacht, instead of being bound to the West Indies or to the Brazils as Sparshot had conjectured, was making the voyage to the Cape, or perhaps farther eastward still. Her captain would be very well pleased to sail in company with such a big,

well-found ship as the *Southern Cross*. He might want to compare chronometers; he might run short of water; his crew might be weakened by sickness; he might be dismasted—in fact, one of the hundred maritime difficulties might happen to him; in which case there would be a large ship within the compass of the yacht's horizon to signal to and obtain help from.

All this the Captain and mates and saloon passengers of the *Southern Cross* perfectly understood; nothing was unintelligible but the distance the steamer kept, as though she coquetted with the big ship, sometimes steering until from the cross-trees of the *Southern Cross* no more than a fragment of her top-mast canvas was to be distinguished hovering like a butterfly over the edge of the ocean in the far-off windy blue; and sometimes heading until she had risen her square-sail to its clews. That she could sail faster than the *Southern Cross* was certain. She kept her position abeam of the ship as persistently as though she had been a man-of-war convoying the liner to her destination. The weather, of course, suffered this; but if she meant to hold the *Southern Cross* in sight, it remained to be seen what her commander would do should it come on to blow or thick weather set in.

The yacht was, naturally, though occasionally only, a subject of conversation on board the *Southern Cross*. She was in sight on the morning of the third day—always dating from the departure from the island. All the passengers were on deck, Captain Sparshot

among them, and Mr. Sampson, the second mate, who had charge of the ship, stumped the break of the poop to and fro, to and fro, athwartships in the regular sea-walk of an officer of the watch.

"So that's our friend of Madeira out yonder, again!" said Mr. Eden, taking an opera-glass from his wife's hand and levelling it at the horizon, where a marble-white shaft of sail was showing, clear-cut as a pinnacle of iceberg upon the sea-line that resembled a rim of glass tinctured by the blue of the sky you saw through it.

"Yes, that's the steam-yacht," answered Captain Sparshot.

"She holds her own wonderfully well," said Mr. Winthrop. "Do you think she sometimes uses her engines, Captain?"

"I think it very likely that she does, sir," answered Sparshot, with a glance up aloft, and then a look at the water over the lee side, where the white swirl from the shouldering bow came eddying and seething and hissing and frolicking in many snow-like shapes of glistening beauty round the quarter to join the spreading furrow of yeast astern.

"Don't you think," exclaimed Major Stopford-Creake, approaching the group of passengers in a lounging way, and speaking with a slight drawl, "that one reason for her keeping at a long distance from us is that we may not see when she uses her engines?"

"I am disposed to agree with you, Major," said the

Captain, whose speech to this son of a lord was invariably marked by a tone of respect which did not accentuate his language when he conversed, for example, with Mr. du Boulay or Mr. Winthrop.

"But if she uses her engines," said Mr. Eden, "wouldn't you see the smoke pouring out of her chimney?"

"Perhaps not, sir," answered Sparshot.

"It would not be fair to call it a race if she is using steam unbeknown to us," said Mrs. Dines.

"It's no race," exclaimed Mr. du Boulay; "she is wisely keeping us in sight in case she should come to want help. She is no more than a cock-boat for such a sea as this."

"A cock-boat as big as a gun-boat, anyway," said Mr. Winthrop. "What's her tonnage do you say, Captain?"

"I cannot say—I did not observe—those steamers are misleading," answered the Captain. "She might be a hundred and fifty tons," he added.

"Did anybody take notice of her while she lay at Madeira?" inquired Mr. du Boulay.

Nobody happened to have regarded her with any degree of attention. Mrs. Dines declared that she never even saw her until she began to follow the ship. Mrs. Wreathock said that she had not observed the yacht; "but then," added the young widow, smiling at Sparshot, "all ships are alike to me, as I suppose they are to most women. I can see the differ-

ence between a big ship and a little ship, and that is all."

"Perhaps Mr. Sampson noticed her," said Mr. Sparkes. "He is a sailor, and sailors have eyes in their heads for everything that floats."

Without being in the least degree interested in the subject, and influenced merely by a desire to amuse his passengers, Captain Sparshot called to Mr. Sampson, the second mate, who immediately stepped aft.

"Mr. Sampson," said the Captain, "did you notice that schooner away yonder when she lay off the island?"

"Slightly, sir."

"Only slightly?"

"She is a steam-yacht, sir," said Mr. Sampson, "very heavily rigged for a vessel of her class."

"Yes, that we have already found out," said Sparshot, dryly. "Did you observe any ladies or gentlemen on board?"

"No, sir; but I believe her skipper came alongside this ship."

"Alongside to have a look at us, I suppose?" said Sparshot.

"I did not see him come aboard," said Mr. Sampson. "I was on the forecastle and looking over the side, and saw a yacht's dingy leave our ship. It was the same dingy, I believe, that I had seen making for us from the yacht. The man in the stern-sheets had the appearance of the yacht's commander."

"He may have approached us," said Mr. Winthrop, "to find out where we were bound to, with the intention of keeping us company."

"Why not signal her?" said Mr. du Boulay; "she is not too proud to give us her name, I suppose, despite her holding off as though there was a fraudulent debtor in her cabin, and a brace of sheriff's officers in ours."

"Make our number, sir," said Sparshot to the second mate; saying to himself as he spoke the words, "anything to keep 'em amused — anything to keep 'em amused."

A string of pretty flags soared to the gaff-end of the *Southern Cross*. Every passenger who owned or who could borrow a telescope or a binocular-glass directed it at the distant spires of canvas. Captain Sparshot placed a powerful field-glass of his own in Mrs. Wreathock's hands, and gazed a moment at her charming profile when her eyes were at the lenses. But the yacht was too remote for anything but a good telescope to enable the sight to distinguish an answering signal aboard her. Sparshot peered through his own fine glass, and Mr. Sampson through the ship's.

"Well, and what do you see?" cried Mrs. Dines, presently, to the Captain.

"Why, this, madam," answered Sparshot, talking with his right eye glued to the glass. "I see a bit of a steam-yacht whose bulwark is just 'dipping,' as we say: she is sliding through it as fast as ourselves, and

without showing all the canvas she is able to spread. But I don't mean to say her screw is not revolving. . . . What's that? . . . Yes, there goes her answering pennant. She made out our number, ladies. Now we shall see if she means to favor us with *her* name. Mr. Sampson, you will haul down those colors."

No sooner had the flags which decorated the gaff-end of the *Southern Cross* been lowered than Captain Sparshot, who kept his eye at his telescope, remarked that the yacht hauled down her answering pennant. This was to have been expected. But instead of making her own number, instead—in other words—of spelling her name with flags, the steam-yacht slightly shifted her helm, and Sparshot did not need to look long to discover that the little vessel was drawing away, and that if she held on as she was now going she would be very shortly out of sight.

The passengers expressed some disappointment. Mrs. Dines, who claimed as an old passenger to know something of the customs and courtesies of the sea, declared that the master of the yacht must be a man of a vulgar mind, without a nice feeling in him. The Major was of opinion that the captain of the steamer was a sensitive man, who desired to keep the *Southern Cross* in sight, but who did not wish that Captain Sparshot and the people of the ship should suppose that he was governed by any desire of the sort, lest they should conclude that he was a timid person. This notion seemed to amuse Mr. du Boulay, and he

broke into a laugh; on which the Major, after viewing him sternly for a few moments, turned on his heels and walked forward.

But the matter was one to quickly lose interest. There are many surly skippers at sea, and the master of the yacht was clearly a rude and ill-conditioned man. He desired the company of the *Southern Cross*, and yet refused to be in the least degree sociable. Be it so. The ocean was wide; there was plenty of room for both ships; apparently the steam-yacht was even now forging ahead down the slope of the ocean with the intention of putting herself out of sight. And, indeed, of her meaning there could be no doubt, when, shortly after eight bells had been made by the Captain's sextant, it was discovered that there was not a glimpse of the yacht's loftiest canvas to be obtained from the deck of the ship.

The passengers went about their pleasures as usual. Mrs. Sparkes opened a novel; her elder daughter played at draughts with Mr. Winthrop; Miss de la Taste in the saloon sang without much sweetness at the piano-forte; Mr. du Boulay made his peace with the Major, and smoked cigars with the honorable and gallant gentleman under the break of the poop; and Captain Sparshot walked the deck with the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock, and very agreeably diverted her with a number of salt experiences of his own, leaving Mrs. Dines to amuse herself at whist in the cabin with Mr. and Mrs. Eden and Mrs. du Boulay.

Thus passed the afternoon. But when, after dinner, Captain Sparshot went on deck, accompanied by most of the passengers, Mr. Parr, who had charge of the watch, stepping up to him with a flourish of his thumb in the direction of the peak of his cap, exclaimed, "Our friend is in sight again, sir," and he pointed to the horizon right abeam, where, like a delicate shading of a pencil upon a ground of amber, floated the canvas of the steam-yacht against the dim and dying flush of sunset.

"I'll thank you for five shillings, Eden," exclaimed Mr. Winthrop; and Mr. Eden, who had betted that the schooner would not again be seen, pulled out two half-crowns and gave them to Mr. Winthrop.

The fine breeze which was at this hour blowing, and which had been blowing throughout the day, carried the ship to the tropic confines, and next day she took the north-east trade-wind and bowled along her course for the equator, with studding-sails out to port and the water white as milk alongside the starboard. Her pace was indeed noble; there was the right weight of wind for the *Southern Cross;* it blew whence it should to suit her heels, and she swept through the glistening ridges with a snow-storm at her bows, and with the sunshine along her decks leaping with the shadows of her rigging, and with a sparkle of salt-dried plank, of skylight window, of brilliant binnacle, or brass drum-head and rail-pin along the length of her.

And all this while the schooner kept her company. It was remarked that she seldom showed more of her hull than the line of her bulwark-rails. Sometimes she would forge ahead and disappear, and then when next sighted she would be some speck of canvas far away down on the quarter. Only once was smoke observed to issue from her funnel. This happened one mid-day, when the north-east trade-wind suddenly freshened and blew with so much spite as to oblige the *Southern Cross* to haul down her studding-sails and furl her three royals. *Then* it was seen that the yacht under canvas only was not going to hold her own with the Australian liner in strong breezes. That the little steamer, however, did not mean to lose sight of her big companion was proved by her firing up shortly after it had been perceived that the ship was walking away from her. Her propeller gave her the additional speed she needed, and she resumed her position abeam—now to leeward, as it had been with her ever since the trade-wind first came on to blow—never showing more of herself than from the line of her rails, and coming and going to the eye in the ocean haze over the horizon as the seas rose and fell between.

But when the wind slackened afresh into the ten-knot breeze it had heretofore been blowing, the filtering of smoke died out of the steamer's funnel, and it was plain that she was once more saving her coal, and keeping the liner in sight by sail power only.

Long before this time everybody had grown so used to the sight of her that she had ceased to be an object of interest. *Now* she could interest only by disappearing, for then she would excite speculations. Would she reappear? And bets were certain to be made upon this. If ever she was talked of, it was only by some one or other who would wonder where she was bound to, and when she would make a departure for her destination and disappear.

"She is certain to lose sight of us if she don't come closer," Captain Sparshot once said.

"She has not done so yet," was the answer.

"No," said Sparshot; "but we are not going to have clear weather and steady breezes all the way out; it will come on thick some day, and then she will lose us."

"This side of the Line do you think, Captain?" inquired the Major.

"Oh, it is hard to say, sir," answered Sparshot; "probably not. We look for smooth waters and troublesome airs till we strike the south-east trades, though I have met with some handsome dustings in the doldrums in my time, too. But until thick and heavy weather comes along she can't well miss us; she is our match and more than our match as a sailer in most winds, given a middling quiet sea; and when it shall come to what I call the sneaking parts of the water, where the wind blows only to dodge a ship, why there are her engines to enable her to keep sight of us."

"I bet," said Mr. Winthrop, "that when the calms come she will steam ahead and leave us."

"What will you bet?" said Mr. du Boulay.

"I will bet a sovereign," said Mr. Winthrop.

"Done," said Mr. du Boulay.

"You will lose your money, Winthrop," said Mr. Eden. "I have a notion, and I will tell you what it is. The owner of that yacht is on board with his wife. His wife is a very timid woman, and she consented to accompany her husband only on condition that the steamer should always keep a fine ship in sight. We happen to be that ship."

"A rich idea!" cried Mrs. Dines.

Sparshot laughed, and walked to the open skylight to listen to Mrs. Wreathock, who was playing upon the piano.

CHAPTER VIII.

A QUIET NIGHT.

Now one day when the *Southern Cross* was still a good number of leagues north of the equator, it befell, as the Captain had predicted, and, indeed, as any one of the passengers might have foretold: the Australian liner rushed out of the north-east trade-wind into a gentle air from the westward, which gave her way for a while, then left her; and then she floated upright upon a sea that seemed the deader for the hot and sickly swell that ran through it, making you think of the lifeless and breathless lifting of alligators to the surface of a hot, greasy, yellow African river. Her canvas hung up and down; the red fly of her mast-head vane was like a streak of paint upon the dim blue air; an intolerable smell of blistered pitch rose from her sides; the saloon was suffocating with its ancient odor of meals, its aromas of stuffed horse-hair and hot morocco; and there was not enough air on deck to do so much as sway the wind-sails, whose heels dangled in the cuddy through the open skylights.

"This is what they call being becalmed near the equator," said Mr. Eden to Miss de la Taste. "I hope you are enjoying it?"

"Alas! I am not a mermaid," answered Miss de la Taste.

"There's our friend down yonder!" exclaimed Mr. Sparkes, rising through the companion-hatch, and pointing to the horizon over the bow; "Winthrop has won his sovereign. The yacht is steaming ahead and is leaving us."

"Not at all," exclaimed Mr. du Boulay, coming from the rail over which he had been staring in the direction of the steamer; "the yacht is not leaving us. She is motionless like ourselves. She has furled her canvas, and Winthrop's sovereign is mine."

"But, my dear fellow," cried Mr. Sparkes—for by this time, as you may suppose, the passengers were on very friendly terms—"don't you see that the yacht is ahead of us?"

"That is because our ship is no longer under command of her helm," said Mr. du Boulay; "she has twisted round, can't you see? The yacht will be on the other bow before long, and by-and-by you will find her astern of us."

Here Mr. Winthrop arrived, and eagerly peered at the steamer through a telescope.

"Who's to say," cried he, "what she is doing? There is nothing to be seen of her but her naked masts and funnel. If she is motionless now she may change her mind presently and steam out of sight. I sha'n't consider my bet lost until to-morrow morning shows us whether she is or is not out of the range of

our horizon, measuring the sea from our main-royal yard up there."

It was too hot to argue; Mr. du Boulay languidly said, "All right, let it be as you say;" and the subject was dropped.

As the afternoon advanced the weather slightly thickened, dimming somewhat the fiery eyes of the sun, but leaving all his former heat in the duller blaze and slightly narrowing the ocean line, so that when Mr. Winthrop, to satisfy his curiosity, climbed uneasily up the mizzen-shrouds into the mizzen-top with a telescope slung round his shoulder he could see nothing of the yacht.

Everybody looked forward to the night: to the cool, the dew, the refreshing dusk of night after the wide tropic glare of the day, the steely glitter under the sun, and the oven-like breathlessness of the atmosphere. And when the night came along, dark indeed it was, with the ocean like a surface of black grease weakly heaving in a thick and sickly swell through the gloom, that seemed more like a smouldering of the atmosphere than pure air. The stars were spare and faint, the new moon had followed in the wake of the sun, had dwelt for a little like a red scar on the dark face of the west, and then died out, vanishing before it had set.

Most of the passengers were on deck. They were seated under a short awning which had been left spread as a shelter from the heavy dew. The lighter

sails had been furled to save them from chafing; but the great main-sail drooped in festoons from its yard, and every light movement of the ship made a fan of the fall of pallid cloths, and the eddying draughts, sweet and cool with dew, ran along the decks.

The hush when the ear went to it was mighty and heart-subduing, coming as it did out of those vast reaches of smoke-like dusk, through which here and there a lean star peered as dull as a reflection of itself in clouded glass. You were made more sensible of the marvellous stillness of the sea by sounds which defined the silence by breaking into it: a short sob of water at the rudder, the frog-like croak of a panel, the sudden noise of a sail hollowing in and striking some mast high in the gloom with a sound like the explosion of a musket up there.

The hour was about nine o'clock. A hum of conversation came from the direction of the forecastle, but it was so dark that way that the figures of the people were indistinguishable from the poop.

"It is a very dark night," said Mrs. Dines; "I hope nothing ain't likely to run into us, Capting."

"I cannot imagine anything more awful than a collision at sea," said Mrs. Sparkes.

"Don't mention it, I beg of you, on a dark night, and the Capting not answering," said Mrs. Dines.

"Pray, what would you have me say, Mrs. Dines?" inquired the Captain. "I am not very much afraid of anything running into us. Steamers are not so

plentiful as all that down in this part of the ocean; and what under sail is going to foul us when there is not air enough to blow the scent off a milkmaid, as Jack says? However, to ease your mind, Mrs. Dines" —and he called out, "Mr. Parr!"

"Sir!"

"Ascertain if the side-lights are burning brightly."

The side-lights were ascertained to be burning as brightly as the most cautious commander could wish, and Mrs. Dines owned that the news comforted her.

Here Mrs. Wreathock's gentle voice broke in with several questions. What were side-lights, and where were they placed, and why was one of them red and the other green? The Captain furnished her with the information she sought. The conversation then came back again to collisions. Mr. Sparkes, taking a sip of brandy-and-soda, and putting the glass carefully down on the deck, wished to know what was the first thing to be done when one ship ran into another.

"Take to the boats, of course," said Mr. Winthrop.

A nautical argument followed, and the Captain listened with a smile to it, as Mrs. Wreathock was able to observe by the sheen from the skylight, which revealed most of the people to one another; but he took no part in the discussion.

The Major, who was seated upon a camp-stool a short way from the group, but within easy talking distance, exclaimed,

"I suppose the first business of the captain of a ship is to ascertain the damage done to his own vessel; then to stand by the other ship, learn the extent of her injuries, and render all possible help to her people?"

"That's as it should be," said the Captain.

"But what could be done on a dark night like this?" continued the Major. "I presume a commander would burn port-fires and send up rockets?"

"Port-fires and rockets would indicate the situation of the surviving ship to all boats which might be adrift with people in them," said Captain Sparshot.

"What is a port-fire?" inquired Mrs. Wreathock.

"Yes, what is a port-fire?" said Mrs. Dines.

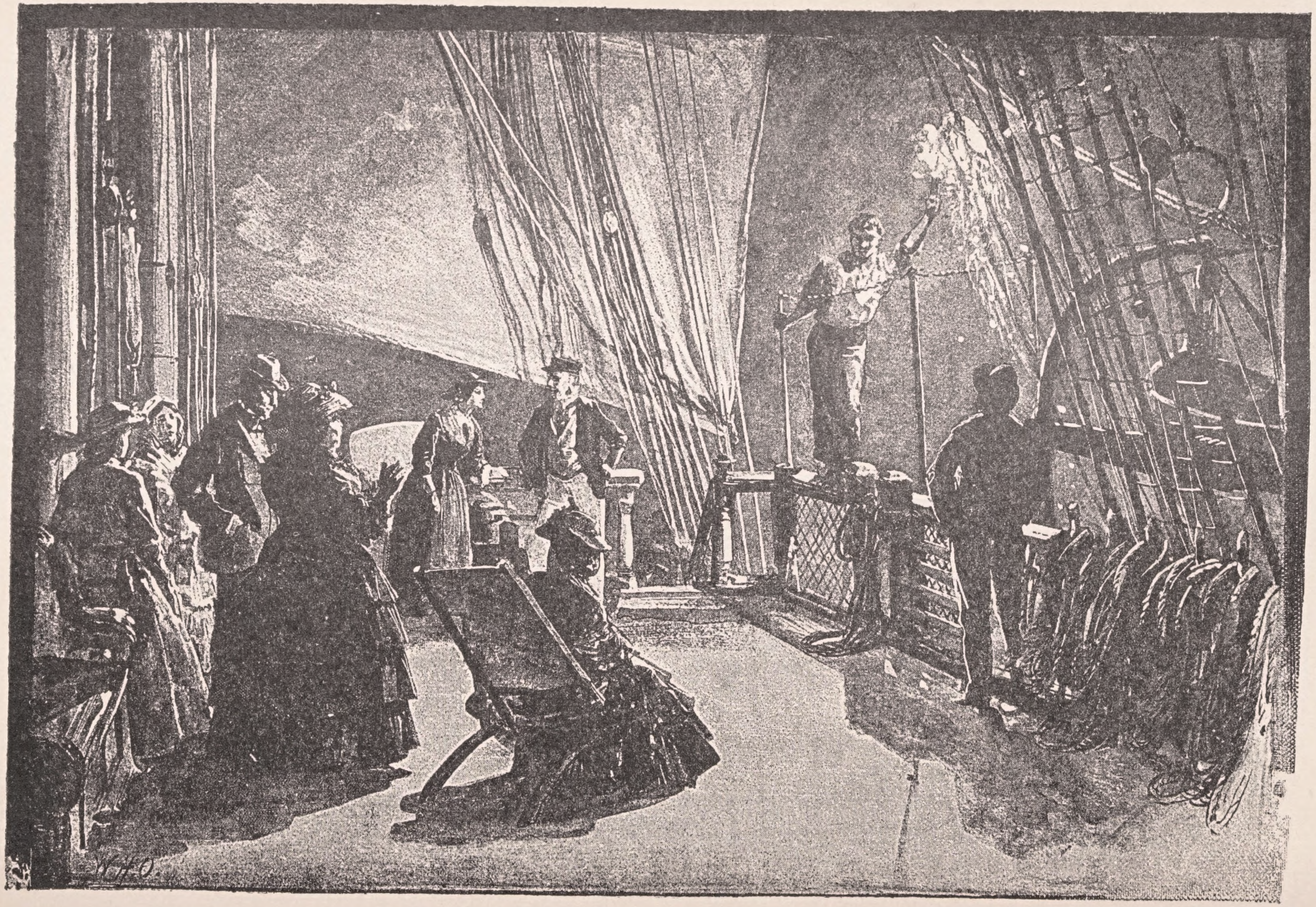
"It is a tube," answered the Captain, "filled with some combustious stuff which, when fired, gushes out in flame like water out of a scupper-hole."

"And what is a rocket?" asked Mrs. Wreathock.

"Surely you know what a rocket is, Fanny!" said the Major.

"I know that a rocket is a firework," said Mrs. Wreathock; "but am I to believe that they use fireworks for signals?"

"Not fireworks according to the meaning that is in your mind," said Sparshot. "Rockets ashore burst into several colored balls and the like. The ocean rocket was not invented to please the eye. It was mainly meant as an appeal to benevolence."



"IN AN INSTANT A BRILLIANT BLOOD-RED STREAM OF FIRE WAS POURING FROM THE MOUTH OF THE TUBE."

"I would give anything," said Mrs. Wreathock, "to see a port-fire let off, and a rocket sent up."

"Would you?" said the Captain.

"I would, indeed," exclaimed the charming young widow. "How wildly lovely and romantic this noble ship would look colored by such a fountain-like flame as you describe a port-fire makes."

"What d'ye say, Mrs. Dines, to a small exhibition of fireworks?" said the Captain.

"I shall enjoy the sight if there is no fear of the ship being set on fire," answered Mrs. Dines.

The others eagerly entreated that a port-fire should be let off and a rocket sent up; on which Captain Sparshot called to Mr. Parr and gave him certain instructions, adding, "The yacht'll guess we're amusing our passengers; if not, she must send a boat and be ——!" Shortly afterwards the passengers assembled in a body at the end of the starboard poop-ladder, and an order was given to a man stationed on the bulwark-rail to discharge the tube he grasped. In an instant a brilliant blood-red stream of fire was pouring from the mouth of the tube into the sea. The picture was wonderfully fine and wild; more so than Mrs. Wreathock could have imagined. The crimson lustre tinged a wide compass of atmosphere; the sails glanced out to the light as though touched by red moonshine; at the foot of every figure a black shadow swung to the cradling heave of the sea; the shrouds shone as though formed of twisted gold, and the water

was flashed up by the sparkling ruddy fall till you could see the blackness of the night standing upright beyond, as though some colossal rampart wall, a part only of which was visible, environed the ship.

The port-fire blazed for some time. Everybody loudly applauded it. Mrs. Wreathock, standing by the Captain's side, murmured exclamations of delight, and the Major, forgetting himself for the moment, swore with an oath that he had never witnessed a more magnificent sight in all his life.

Here was praise to improve Sparshot's spirits. It was a cheap entertainment so far as the resources of the ship were concerned; and Sparshot was one of those skippers who regard the entertaining of passengers, and the making them pleased with the vessel and willing to recommend her—to say nothing of a silver claret jug or some presentation fal-lal of that sort at the end of the passage or voyage—as among the foremost of the obligations of shipboard routine.

"Rocket ready?" he called out.

"All ready, sir," responded Mr. Parr from the ship's quarter.

"Up with it!" cried Sparshot, and up it went, with a sort of long, snoring hiss, and a beautiful explosion of sun-bright flame.

"It's really like being at a *feet*," cried Mrs. Dines, who, it must in justice be said, rarely spoke French. "I prefer them rockets to the other thing; they are less dangerous and much more astonishing than lightning."

Mrs. Wreathock begged Captain Sparshot to send up another rocket.

"It will be something for me to remember," said she. "Often have I wished to see a rocket sent up at sea. One associates the rocket with the life-boat, the stranded vessel, the dark night of storm."

"Fire another rocket, Mr. Parr," exclaimed Sparshot. This time the soaring explosive burst into a ball of blue fire, which rushed into the sky in a line as straight as the mast of a ship, and the glittering particles floated slowly downward direct from the spot where the ball had exploded, showing that there was not a breath of air in motion aloft or below.

Sparshot was warmly thanked for this pleasing and (to Mrs. Wreathock) instructive exhibition. The passengers resumed their seats under the awning. But the Major stalked here and there about the deck, as though rendered restless by the heat, that was indeed excessive. Sometimes he would pause at the rail, and look for a minute into the darkness beyond. Sometimes he would wander in a mechanical way to the binnacle and fix his eyes on the compass-card idly, as though with a loathing of the tedium of the sea life, and more particularly of these dark, sultry current hours of it. Once while sauntering he came across Mr. Parr, who stood on the starboard quarter of the ship near the wheel. The officer seemed to be hearkening after and straining his gaze at something.

"Is this calm going to last, do you think?" inquired the Major.

"There is every appearance of it lasting, sir," answered Mr. Parr.

"Are there any particular signs to enable a man to judge of the weather hereabouts?" said the Major.

"I know these latitudes fairly well," answered Mr. Parr; "and in my experience this is the sort of calm that lasts. There are three signs of a lasting calm—when the water is like warm dripping, and heaves in a sort of strangling swell; when the weather is thick without being cloudy, giving you a sight of a star or two only, without anything to be seen to hide the rest; when—" he broke off and said, after a pause, "I seem to see a shadow out there that looms like the hull of a vessel. I am wondering if our rockets have called the yacht to us."

The Major stared and exclaimed, "You have very good eyes, Mr. Parr; I see nothing."

"And neither do I now," said Mr. Parr.

"I fancied, sir," rumbled the fellow who grasped the spokes of the wheel, "that the steam-yacht what's bin keepin' company with us ain't far off. Seems as if she wur messin' about on the lookout for us. I heard a sort of breathing not long ago like to what a steamer's engines make when they move slow, and sends a spurt o' water out in slops from a hole in the wessel's side."

Mr. Parr left the rail to procure a night-glass. The

Major joined the passengers and told them that the man at the wheel believed that their Madeira friend the steam-yacht was not far off.

"I hope the man at the wheel is right," cried Mr. du Boulay, with a laugh.

The news caused some commotion. The passengers with binoculars and telescopes explored the darkness all the way round the ship. At times one would fancy he saw a smudge; and at times another would imagine that he beheld a tiny point of light. But whatever was seen was clearly no more than a deceit of the vision, some illusive shapings of the folds of the liquid gloom that seemed to work in eddies as it was looked at.

Nothing was visible and nothing was to be heard.

"You may pay me that sovereign at once if you like, Du Boulay," exclaimed Mr. Winthrop. "No steamer is going to stick here in this calm if she has got a shovelful of coals on board to boil her water with."

CHAPTER IX.

"IN THE MIDDLE WATCH."

THE middle watch at sea extends from midnight until the hour of four. In this age of steam it is difficult for the travelled reader to understand the sort of death-like pause that happens in the middle watch in a sailing ship when she lies without motion in the deep stagnation of an intertropic calm.

What manner of midnight hush it is that lies like a sensible burden upon a sailing ship becalmed at midnight in mid-ocean you would have understood had you stepped from the cabin of the *Southern Cross* to her deck. The lamps were extinguished in the saloon. There was no light to be seen fore and aft the bulky lifting shadow of the vessel, save the sheen of the side-lamps in their screens forward, and the haze of the binnacle lamp with the vague shape of the helmsman beyond it. All the passengers were in bed. The Captain had gone below at seven bells (half-past eleven), after giving Mr. Parr certain directions. But it was now past midnight, and at twelve o'clock the port watch had been relieved, so that the officer of the deck was the second mate, young Mr. Sampson, whose figure you might see leaning against the rail or glid-

ing aft with a drowsy motion. Sometimes he would look at the compass, loudly yawning into it; then he would stare around into the darkness that lay upon the sea; then he would go again to the rail and lean against it.

The middle watch forms a fearfully dull four hours on board a ship becalmed. Mr. Sampson could not converse with the man at the wheel; he dared not sit lest he should nod and be caught sleeping by the Captain, and perhaps ruined for life; he could, indeed, smoke, and this he did, lighting his pipe stealthily, and holding the bowl in his fist that the glowing tobacco might not be seen. He envied the common sailors—those forecastle Jacks who were privileged to coil themselves away in nooks and corners and sleep through their watch, prepared nevertheless to spring to their feet and fly to the first hoarse roar that should be delivered from the poop.

One bell was struck—half-past twelve. The chime had scarcely trembled into silence when a figure arose through the companion-way out of the saloon, and stood for a few moments as though looking about; then distinguishing the shape of the second mate as he hung over the rail sucking at his pipe, and gazing into the sea, thinking perhaps less of England than of home and beauty, the figure, with a military stride, walked to where the officer was.

"It's too frightfully hot to sleep," exclaimed the familiar voice of Major Stopford-Creake.

Mr. Sampson instantly stood bolt upright.

"Do not put your pipe away," continued the Major. "Or, well—put it away and take one of my cigars;" and he opened a cigar-case and gave Mr. Sampson a small, full-flavored cigar. He then himself lighted one, and, with an affability that was unusual in him, entered into conversation with the second mate. He asked several questions of interest to Mr. Sampson—how long had he been to sea? when did he expect to obtain command? did he like the calling of the ocean? was interest a condition of promotion in the Merchant Service as it was in the Royal Navy, in which he had an uncle, Lord Balmington, who was an admiral, and so on. Nothing broke the stillness but the hum of this conversation if it were not for an occasional flap of sail up aloft or a greasy, gurgling sound of water alongside.

"Do you know," said the Major, "that I find the flavor of these cigars curiously improved by Benedictine, a liqueur I never travel without? One cannot get a decent liqueur on board ship."

He drew a flask from his pocket, and removed the little silver cup in which it was fitted, and half-filled the cup with the liqueur which he called Benedictine. He raised the cup to his mouth, then by a gesture seemed to correct himself.

"Try a drop," said he; "it is a fine cordial, with a quality of sweetness that curiously improves the flavor of good tobacco."

Where is the sailor that can refuse a "tot?" and how fond second mates are of drams everybody knows from the bigness of the draught that at sea goes by the name of "a second mate's nip."

"D'ye take it neat, sir?" said Mr. Sampson.

"Oh, certainly; liqueurs are always drunk neat," answered the Major, with no hint in his voice of the merriment which the plain and honest second mate's question might reasonably have provoked in him.

Mr. Sampson put the silver cup to his mouth and drained it, and when he had drained it he smacked his lips, and said, "So they call that Benedictine! Glad to know it, sir, for it's lush that's going to cost me some well-spent dollars before I am done with this world."

It was evident that he liked it. He lifted his cigar again to his lips, and he and the Major continued to chat; but after they had been conversing for some time Mr. Sampson's utterance grew thick, his speech expressed bewilderment, as though he were an astonished man; he let his cigar fall, and while stooping to pick it up he sank upon his hand in the posture of a coolie sucking at a hubble-bubble, and thus he remained.

The Major walked leisurely to the wheel and glanced at the compass-card as though he had stepped aft for no other purpose, and, looking forward towards the bows, he observed that the sheen of the binnacle light deepened, by troubling the eye, the gloom which

lay upon the ship. The figure of the second mate blended with the rail and with the rigging that came down to the after end of the main chains, and it was absorbed in the general shadow.

"It is a still night," said the Major, addressing the fellow at the helm, who stood mute and motionless at the spokes.

"It is, sir."

"There is no objection, I suppose," continued the Major, "to a passenger conversing with the man at the wheel on such a night as this?"

"There ain't much that requires attention when the ocean's quiet as muck and the wind's up and down," answered the man.

"How long do you stand here?"

"Two hours, sir."

"It must be dull work."

"Aye, I'd rather be abed and asleep."

"The heat is terrible below, and there are cockroaches in my cabin."

"Measly things they be, specially in a man's 'lowance o' molasses."

"I have a dram in my pocket," said the Major, pulling out the flask; "a dram can do you no hurt; but we must bear a hand," he added, with much good-nature in his voice, "lest the second officer should step aft and stop me."

"You're werry good, sir," said the man, with a nervous, expectant shuffle of his feet and a writhe of

his body; for here was not only rare condescension, here, too, was a "drop o' strong," so happily timed that it might have been commended to the lips of this thirsty sailor—and where is the sailor that is not thirsty?—by an angel hand out of the breathless dusk.

"This is a liquor that is not often served out to sailors by the tot on board ship, I should think," said the Major, and he handed the silver cup to the seaman, who, saying, "Well, here's to you, sir, and thankin' you kindly," took down the draught at a gulp.

The Major put the flask in his pocket, lingered a short while on deck, then entering the companion-way, descended into the saloon, and walked to the forward end where stood the door that conducted to the quarter-deck. He closed this door very softly, locked it noiselessly, withdrew the key, and placed it on the deck under a sofa. This done, he went to his cabin and took from a bag a small circular buoy that was like a model of such a buoy as would be thrown to a man if he fell overboard. He then softly knocked thrice upon the bulkhead on the right-hand side of his cabin, and as he stepped through the door of his berth the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock, dressed in a tight-fitting jacket and a turban-shaped hat, came out of her cabin. Not a syllable was uttered by either. The Major went on deck, and his sister followed; and no sooner had they gained the deck than the Major silently secured the entrance to the saloon by closing

the doors of the companion, drawing the cover over, and fixing the bar to its staple, from which, however, the padlock had been removed, though padlock or no padlock it would now be impossible for any one inside the saloon to get out.

The man who had been standing at the wheel was upon the grating just abaft it. He had seated himself, but his form had yielded while he sat; he had fallen upon his side on the grating, and there he lay motionless as a corpse.

"Quickly now!" exclaimed the Major, in a whisper, fierce with feverish hurry.

Mrs. Wreathock apparently knew what to do. She walked to the mizzen-shrouds on the port or left-hand side of the vessel, got upon the rail, and, without the hand of the Major, with amazing agility and in a few moments, sank out of sight onto the platform that in those days widened the stretch of the mizzen-shrouds, and that was called the mizzen-channel. It was a descent that she had doubtless mentally practised over and over again, often during the passage going to the vessel's side and studying the intricacies of the rigging and the character of the platform; otherwise, surely must she have been at a loss in attempting the descent, small as the height was, on so dark a night, without the grip of a hand to steady her, and hampered besides by her apparel.

The Major, looking over and perceiving that the widow was safe in the mizzen-channel, breathlessly

whispered down: "Not a sound! Be careful not to cough—the Du Boulays' window is on one side of you and the Edens' on the other, and they are certain to be wide open!" And having said this, he stole away aft to the grating upon which the motionless seaman lay, and, getting upon it, he crawled on his knees to the taffrail, over which he projected his head and listened while he might have counted ten. He then held the buoy which he had brought with him from his cabin over the edge of the taffrail, drew a wax match from his pocket, struck it, lighted a cone-shaped fuze, and dropped the buoy into the water.

Whatever it was that he lighted upon the buoy burned in a small but strong bright flame. The light was under the counter of the ship; the eddying of the water round about the stern-post of the becalmed vessel that was bowing gently on the weak swell of the sea seemed to somewhat suck the illuminated buoy towards the rudder, and the radiance was concealed from the cabin windows by the shelf of the great square counter of the *Southern Cross*.

The Major watched the light for a little while; he watched it and listened; then went to the side of the ship where the mizzen-shrouds descended to their dead-eyes in the channel, slipped down by the rigging, and stood beside Mrs. Wreathock.

"There she is!" faintly whispered the widow, and her shadowy arm and pallid hand pointed into the gloom of the sea on the quarter.

Now might be heard the half-smothered, faintly-dripping noise of muffled oars warily plied, but sullenly creaking in their rowlocks all the same. The shape of a boat oozed out of the dusk; in a few beats of the heart—so short was the distance which the eye could measure in that deep midnight gloom—she was under the platform on which the Major and his sister stood. There were two figures in her. In silence the Major grasped his sister by the arm, and manœuvred so as to get her outside the rigging; one of the figures in the boat extended his hands, and received her as though she weighed no more than a child, and seated her. The Major, kneeling on the edge of the platform, dropped one leg till his foot was in the grasp of the man who had received the widow, and in an instant he was safe in the boat.

"Hark!" he cried.

A sound of knocking, accompanied by dulled cries, proceeded from the poop.

"Shove off while I turn the bull's-eye on," said one of the men in a deep voice.

The boat was thrust from the ship's side by an oar, and as her head swept round the fellow who had last spoken twisted the obscuring part of a bull's-eye, and held it above his head with its shining lens pointing to the quarter of the sea whence the boat had emerged. The signal was almost immediately answered by the sudden springing up of a small bright light out in the thick dusk; but how far off it was the

most experienced eye might have been defied to guess.

"Now pull like blazes!" said the owner of the deep voice.

Captain Sparshot, who had gone to bed at half-past eleven, awoke at twenty minutes to two, and, drawing on his coat and shoes and putting on his cap, he entered the saloon with the intention of going on deck to take a view of the weather. He thought to get out onto the quarter-deck, but found the door closed and locked. He felt for the key, it was gone; he thereupon silently heaped a number of injurious words upon the image of the head steward as it presented itself to his mind, and angrily walked to the companion-steps and mounted them, to find the companion-way closed and barred!

For some moments Sparshot stood motionless with amazement; he conceived that his crew had mutinied and possessed themselves of his ship; the perspiration broke from his brow and trickled down his cheeks; then a fit of rage and consternation combined seized him, and he fell to beating the companion doors with both clinched fists, while he roared at the top of his voice: "Man at the wheel there! open these doors! where's the officer of the watch? what's the meaning of this hatch being closed?"

This was an outcry to murder sleep among the passengers. The first to rush out was Mr. Parr, the chief

officer; but in a minute Mr. Sparkes, Mr. Winthrop, Mr. Eden, and Mr. du Boulay had made their appearance, and the saloon was clamorous with their questions, and with the voices of the ladies shrieking through the open doors of their berths to know what had happened, and if the danger was immediate, and if there was time to dress.

Sparshot, giving no heed to all this noise, ordered Mr. Parr to scramble on deck through one of the skylights, the frame of which stood open. Mr. Parr did so, expecting, however, on showing himself to be stabbed or brained, and his bleeding and still sensible body flung overboard. He squeezed through the frame of the skylight onto the deck, stood for an instant or two looking round, and then, hearing nothing and seeing nothing, jumped for the companion-way, which he opened, and up rushed Sparshot at the head of the gentlemen passengers.

The first thing discovered was the motionless figure of the man who had been at the wheel; the next the equally motionless figure of the second mate, Mr. Sampson, squatting Lascar fashion, breathing so stertorously that the noise was like the rattling of a chain topsail-sheet hauled through a sheave. Sparshot's earliest impression was that both men were drunk. This being Mr. Parr's impression also, he caught hold of Mr. Sampson and kicked and shook and cuffed him, but with no better result than to cause the second mate to roll on his back and lie more motionless than ever.

"He has been drugged, sir," said Mr. Parr.

"I tell you I heard voices," shouted Mr. Winthrop.

"Here's Winthrop says he heard voices under his cabin window!" exclaimed Mr. Eden.

"Why didn't you say so before, sir?" cried Captain Sparshot.

"I have been trying to make myself heard," answered Mr. Winthrop.

"What did you hear?" said the Captain, in a voice that trembled with wrath and agitation.

"I heard a deep voice say, '*Now pull like blazes!*'".

Sparshot sent a look at his quarter-boats, but they all hung safe in their gripes in the davits. By this time not only was the watch on deck wide awake, but the watch below had come tumbling up out of the forecastle, while a number of 'tween-deck passengers had hurried in an extremity of fear out of their quarters, so that the ship was now very wide awake indeed, and her decks full of people.

"Send Mr. Wilkinson here!" cried the Captain; and somebody went below into the steerage, and rummaged out the ship's doctor, who, as he slept in a darksome hole of a cabin right aft, had heard nothing of the commotion above. He came on deck, examined the second mate and the seaman, and pronounced them both drugged—heavily drugged. Mr. Parr's wits seemed more collected than the Captain's.

"There has been a conspiracy here, sir," said he. "These two men have been drugged, and while they

lay stupefied either the ship has been boarded or some people belonging to us have gone away in a strange boat."

"Let everybody be mustered," roared the Captain. "Passengers and crew—every mother's son—and we will see who is missing."

Lanterns were lighted, and the main and quarter decks illuminated; the boatswain's pipe shrilled through the stillness and the gloom, a hoarse roar followed, and was attended by the shuffling sounds of many feet in motion. But Mr. Parr was spared the tedious job of mustering so large a mob of souls as the *Southern Cross* carried by the discovery that Major the Honorable Sebastian Stopford-Creake and his sister, the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock, were not to be found. The stewardess, thinking to reassure Mrs. Wreathock, had looked into her berth and found it empty. This suggested an idea to the steward, who, looking into the Major's cabin, found that *it*, too, was empty. This man rushed on deck crying out the name of Major Stopford-Creake, not yet knowing but that he might be among the male passengers on the poop.

"It's the Honorable pair that's missing, sir," said Mr. Parr, after ten minutes of fruitless hunting and shouting on his own part and on the part of the steward, of two under stewards, of the stewardess, several passengers, and a few seamen.

Sparshot could not credit his hearing.

"I tell you the cry was, '*Now pull like blazes!*'" Mr. Winthrop could be heard exclaiming to a group of the passengers clustered round the skylight.

"They will have had an object in sneaking away?" cried Sparshot, relying in his bewilderment upon his chief officer's sagacity.

"I'll tell you what I think, sir," answered Mr. Parr; "the steamer that's been keeping us company has had a hand in this business. She could lie within a mile of us with her spars naked and all lights doused, and nothing be seen of her nor her presence guessed at in such darkness as this. . . ."

"That port-fire and those rockets!" gasped Sparshot.

Mr. Parr fetched his leg a blow with his open hand.

"By Heaven, sir, I see it!" he cried. "It was Mrs. Wreathock's doing; she it was who asked for the fireworks. Why, of course, the show was intended as a signal for the steamer, and the next step was to wait till all was quiet aboard us; then for the Major or the widow to come on deck and tip Mr. Sampson and the man at the wheel a well-drugged dram—for who would be suspicious of the politeness of that quality couple?—then hail the steamer's boat lying close off in the dark, and enter her—"

He was continuing, but was interrupted by Sparshot flying headlong to the companion-way, down which he bolted with the velocity of a man chased by a mad bull.

CHAPTER X.

SPARSHOT'S SAFE.

One or two of the saloon-lamps had been lighted. Some ladies stood at the foot of the companion-steps, and when Sparshot rushed down past them they cried out to him to stop—to explain what had happened—to tell them if there was any cause to feel frightened because the Major and his sister had mysteriously left the ship; and the one who called most loudly upon Sparshot to stop was Mrs. Dines.

But the Captain, paying no heed to the ladies, plunged through the saloon to his cabin. A bracket-lamp was burning dimly. With a trembling hand he turned up the wick to a bright light, looked at the safe, thrust his hand into his trousers pocket, pulled out a bunch of keys, and singling one of them, applied it to the narrow central drawer of that writing-table on which he had instructed Mrs. Wreathock in the art of navigation—the drawer whence, as we have seen, he had taken the keys of the safe that Mrs. Dines might show her necklace to the widow.

The key went clean through the lock, and when Sparshot endeavored to withdraw it he pulled the drawer open. The lock had been smashed; but the

keys of the safe lay in the drawer just as he had replaced them on that day when Mrs. Dines showed her jewels to Mrs. Wreathock; for since that day Sparshot had had no occasion to examine the safe, and therefore to open the drawer to obtain the keys.

He pulled off his cap and flung it into a corner, and his bald head shone with perspiration in the light of the bracket-lamp as though a can of oil had been capsized over it. He took the keys from the drawer and opened the safe, and he needed to look once only at the upper and lower shelves to see that the safe had been rummaged and robbed. He went down upon his knees, and with both hands explored the bundles and parcels which the thief had left behind. And first he discovered that Mrs. Dines's necklace had been taken, and next that the best of the jewelry which belonged to Mrs. Sparkes and Mrs. du Boulay—the aggregate value of which, doubtless, ran into many hundreds of pounds—was gone!

He rose slowly to his feet, and stood as though bereft of life, staring with open mouth at the safe. He was a man whose spirit no sea difficulty, no ocean peril, providing it was in the way of his profession, could appal or subdue, no matter how sudden and horrible it might be. Sparshot was a person equal to every vocational confrontment, no matter how tragic its countenance. But a rifled safe! To be robbed of thousands of pounds' worth of precious articles committed to his custody! To be monstrously and hide-

ously tricked by a brace of cunning thieves who might or might not be a son and daughter of a lord! To understand that the wretches could not even *now* be far off, but that in so dead a calm as still continued, and with a nimble steamer to receive them, they were to be no more overtaken, captured, and the property recovered than if they had already arrived at New York, and were making the best of their way to San Francisco!

What could this plain merchant captain do? He cursed his ill-luck; he heaped all manner of forecastle blessings upon himself for locking up the keys of a safe in a drawer, instead of carrying them about with him in his breast-pocket. His hands went to his bald head as though in search of hair to tear. He then locked the safe, put the keys in his pocket, and, picking up his cap, entered the saloon.

"Surely, Capting, you will now tell us what's the matter?" cried Mrs. Dines from a sofa on which she was sitting, clad in a gorgeous dressing-gown, with Mrs. Sparkes, Mrs. Eden, Mrs. du Boulay, and Miss de la Taste near her.

"Steward," roared the Captain to the man who stood at the foot of the companion-ladder listening to the talk of some passengers collected above, "find the key of the saloon door if you can; if not, send the carpenter aft to force the lock!" And then he bawled out, "My safe has been robbed!"

"Now don't tell me—" shrieked Mrs. Dines, jump-

ing from the sofa and making a spasmodic run of four or five steps towards Sparshot.

"Yes," he cried, "it's gone—stolen by the Major or his Honorable sister!"

Mrs. Dines fell upon the saloon-deck in a fit.

The greatest confusion followed. Sparshot shouted for the doctor, and, exerting more than human strength, contrived without assistance to lift the apparently lifeless and very nearly shapeless mass of Mrs. Dines onto a sofa. Meanwhile those ladies whose jewelry had been intrusted to Sparshot begged him to tell them if their property was safe, and when the Captain answered that, so far as he could judge, the thieves had made off with the choicest and best of what had been committed to his care, loud were their lamentations, brain-addling their abuse of the Major and the widow. The noisiest was Mrs. du Boulay. She screamed up the companion-steps to her husband to instantly come down-stairs from the deck and learn how infamously she had been robbed, and all through Captain Sparshot having admitted that wretched creature Mrs. Wreathock to his cabin, where, of course, she pried into his secret business, and reported to her confederate, the Major, where Sparshot kept the keys of the safe, and what was inside the safe. Mr. du Boulay descended and listened to his wife, and, forgetting that he was in the presence of ladies, used some very strong language on his realizing that the best of his wife's jewelry was gone.

"Why, damme," he cried, "there was one bracelet, I tell you, that I would not have taken a thousand guineas for; not because it was *worth* a thousand guineas, but because it had been in my mother's family for three generations, damme," etc., etc.

Mr. Sparkes was also exceedingly wràthful on hearing that Mrs. Sparkes's jewels, which he had asked Captain Sparshot to take care of, had been stolen.

"I ought to have kept the things myself," he cried. "I should have known how to take care of them, anyhow. If the beasts had robbed *me* the lookout would have been mine."

"I never took to the widow myself," said Miss de la Taste, who had lost nothing. "Mrs. Dines always made too much of her. I don't believe she was a widow; and as to her being a lord's daughter—" and here Miss de la Taste curled her lip and turned up her nose.

Meanwhile Mrs. Dines lay in a fit upon the sofa, motionless and seemingly lifeless, her throat exposed to give her a chance of breathing, while the stewardess damped her forehead with toilet vinegar, and the doctor looked on. The confusion was increased at this time by the ship's carpenter hammering at the lock of the saloon door. The sound was as though the ship was in dry-dock and being caulked. The windows overlooking the quarter-deck were pale with the faces of 'tween-deck passengers eagerly staring in.

About this moment it occurred to somebody to

suggest that the thieves might have left more behind them in the safe than the Captain's disordered mind had suffered him to perceive; on which Sparshot cried, "Come and look for yourselves!" and the whole body of the passengers followed him into his cabin, leaving Mrs. Dines senseless upon the sofa, attended by the doctor and the stewardess.

But the Captain had been only too accurate in his first gauging of the empty parcels and cases which the Major and his sister had left behind. Almost all that had been worth taking was gone. When the loss was clearly ascertained Sparshot locked the safe afresh and rushed on deck. He could not bear to hear the passengers charge him with gross neglect in placing the keys of his safe in a drawer, nor would he stay to learn that he was recklessly indifferent to the interests of those who sailed with him, that he had had no right to pay such marked attention, as everybody had noticed in him, to a common adventuress: inviting her to his cabin, showing her his mathematical instruments, perhaps telling her where he kept his keys, and behaving, in short, almost as though he were not unwilling she should judge exactly how best to go to work.

"By heavens," cried Mr. Du Boulay, crimson with passion and heat; "it's enough to make one think that the Captain himself was an ally of the rascally pair!"

But, fortunately for Mr. Du Boulay, Sparshot was

out of hearing when this was said, nor was any one kind enough afterwards to repeat the odious and infamous observation to him.

The night had never at any hour been darker than it now was, nor the silence upon the ocean deeper, nor the calm profounder. The few lean stars which had been visible at midnight were gone. The sea was full of fire; the phosphorescent glow gushed, cloud-like, close under the surface in puffs of rich and brilliant green whenever the small rolling of the vessel disturbed the water; and at the time when Sparshot gained the deck a small corposant was burning at the main-topsail yard-arm, and its light lay in the sea under it like the reflection of a star. The drugged man at the wheel had been carried into the forecastle, and the drugged second mate to his cabin. The chief mate stood near the helm sweeping the blackness of the sea with a night-glass.

"Is that you, Mr. Parr?" said Captain Sparshot, going close to him.

"Yes, sir."

"Have you been able to make out anything with your glass?"

"Nothing whatever, sir."

"Step this way," said Sparshot, and he and the mate walked a short distance forward, that they might converse out of earshot of the fellow who had been called aft to take the wheel.

Captain Sparshot was never a man to condescend

to his officers. It was his practice to keep his mates very much at arm's-length. But now he wanted sympathy, now he wanted somebody to talk to, to exchange ideas with, to get an opinion from.

"This has been a most vile and awful conspiracy, sir," said he.

"I never heard of anything more audacious in my life," answered Mr. Parr.

"They have pretty well cleared out the safe," said the Captain; "got away with, I dare say, not less than thirty thousand pounds' worth of jewelry." Astonishment held the mate silent. "I can see it all now," continued Sparshot; "it is as you put it, sir; those two people had heard that we were taking out some valuable jewels, and they hired cabins for no other purpose than to rob Mrs. Dines. Yet how the deuce could they tell where the jewels would be stowed?"

"They would take the chance of finding that out, sir," said the mate.

"No doubt they concluded that the things would be given to me to take charge of," continued the Captain.

"They'd know that the jewelry was on board the ship, anyway," said Mr. Parr; "and the chap who called himself a major, helped by the young party who called herself a widow, meant to have them, let the articles have been stowed where they might."

"And he's got 'em!" exclaimed the Captain. "Did

any man ever hear of the like of such artfulness? They chartered that steam-yacht, of course. There's more concerned in this robbery than those two. No cause to wonder now that that screw schooner should have kept company with us since we left Madeira. Lord, what a scheme! think of the machinery of it and the chances against them! Suppose we had lost sight of the schooner?"

"They reckoned upon finding such weather as we have met with," said the mate. "The trick was to be done 'twixt Madeira and the Line — and done it is! thirty thousand pounds' worth!" and again speech was arrested in him by astonishment.

Sparshot took a step to the skylight, and, looking down, perceived that Mrs. Dines had regained consciousness, and was sitting up sniffing at a smelling-bottle, and rolling her eyes as though she were making ready for another swoon, while she raised and dropped her unemployed hand in a manner whose suggestion of grief and temper was too strong to need accentuation from her face. A number of the passengers stood about her eagerly talking. Sparshot drew back on tiptoe.

"Three months, and perhaps more than three months, of association with that woman, sir!" he exclaimed. "What's to be done, *what's* to be done, I say? Why, of course," he cried, whipping out with a strong word, "there is nothing to be done. But to think of all three months of it yet, with old Dines at

the end—for such a thing to happen to a man who has held command for years, never losing so much as the value of a button—does it serve me right? Never again, sir! Never no more of extra civility because of a title, and—and—Lord bless me! when I think of her wanting to learn navigation!" he continued to mutter; but his disjointed sentences conveyed no meaning to Mr. Parr.

By this time the carpenter had succeeded in forcing open the saloon door, and shortly after he had irreparably injured the lock so far as shipboard artifice went, the steward found the key under the sofa. Captain Sparshot took advantage of the saloon door being opened to steal to his cabin by way of the quarter-deck, thus escaping the observation of the passengers who were assembled in the after-part of the cuddy, and when he had entered his cabin he closed the door, and fell to an examination of the work of the thief.

But what was there to remark! No more than this: that the Major—if, indeed, the Major it was who had done this thing—had inserted the point of some such an instrument as a "pricker," as it is called at sea; in other words, a small marline-spike, and with one or two heavy blows had torn and smashed the lock from its screws, leaving it warped and mutilated in the drawer, with the wood-work round about where it had been screwed in splinters.

When was this done? thought Sparshot, gazing at

the drawer. When was the safe opened and the jewelry taken? But there was no art in conjecture to fix the time. In all probability the Major had sneaked into the Captain's berth not very long after dinner on the previous evening when Sparshot and the passengers had gone on deck, and he would certainly not have required more than ten minutes of undisturbed solitude to achieve all that he needed.

The worthy, honest, good-natured dandy of a merchant skipper cursed himself afresh when he reflected that all unconsciously he had explained to Mrs. Wreathock how to rob the safe: first by opening the drawer and letting her see where the keys were, then by applying the keys and enabling her to observe how the safe was opened, then by disclosing the contents of the safe that she might accurately note the corner in which Mrs. Dines's costly and magnificent necklace was deposited. Yes! Sparshot had taught the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock something more than the art of navigating a ship through the ocean; and he grinned with wrath and shook his fist at the reflection of his convulsed and purple face in a looking-glass as he stood meditating.

CHAPTER XI.

S.S. "SUNFLOWER."

The day broke in a dim coloring of lilac which changed into dingy silver, and the sun rose hot and misty in a sky like that of yesterday, a dull, thick, dusty blue, cloudless from sea-line to sea-line; and the ocean spread away from either hand, the ship, with the same smoked and greasy face it had carried since the preceding noon. So motionless had the vessel hung all night that some floating stuff which the cook's mate had tossed overboard on the previous evening lay within a biscuit toss of the vessel's quarter.

Sparshot was on deck when the sun rose. He directed a telescope narrowly and slowly round the horizon, then requested Mr. Parr to climb to the main-top-mast cross-trees with a glass. But Mr. Parr, after he had gained the cross-trees, beheld nothing to report. The risen sun had hurried the passengers into their respective cabins to attire themselves for the day that had now arrived, and the saloon was empty. Presently the ship's doctor, Mr. Wilkinson, came on to the poop.

"Well, sir?" said Sparshot.

"Mr. Sampson and the other man have come to, sir," said Mr. Wilkinson. "They are both horribly sick, and will have to lie by for some time."

"Has Mr. Sampson got his senses?" demanded Sparshot.

"Yes, sir."

"And what's his story?"

"Why, that Major Stopford-Creake came up to him at one bell in the middle watch this morning, and offered him a cigar and some liqueur which he carried in a flask; Mr. Sampson took a sup of the liqueur, and soon afterwards all recollection departed from him."

"Then that scoundrel Major, I suppose," said Sparshot, "stepped aft to the wheel, and dosed the helmsman with his liqueur." And here he employed some strong language while he inquired of the doctor what right Mr. Sampson had to smoke cigars and drink liqueur with the passengers in his watch on deck.

"He's had his lesson," said Mr. Wilkinson. "He d——s all gentlemanly majors. He'll drink no more liqueurs."

"What was the drug—laudanum?"

"Something that must have been swifter in its operations than laudanum," answered the doctor, "which, moreover, Mr. Sampson would have tasted. I suspect *cocculus indicus*."

The question Sparshot was about to put was interrupted by the appearance of Mrs. Dines, who rose

"'DO YOU MEAN TO TELL ME I HAVE LOST THEM DIAMONDS FOR GOOD?'"

through the companion-hatch with her usually blowzed face pale and half as long again as it commonly was, and her eyelids sore with weeping. The doctor hurried away.

"This is a hideous business, madam," said Sparshot.

"You may call it what you like," said Mrs. Dines. "I want my property. I gave it to you to keep, and you are answerable for it. Gimme my necklace which cost Mr. Dines nearly three-and-twenty thousand pound 'ard money;" and she extended her hand as though Captain Sparshot had the necklace in his pocket, while she placed her left fist upon her hip, and dropped her head on one side, her whole posture being so menacing that it reminded Sparshot of the attitudes the ladies of the slums and blind alleys put themselves into when they enter upon one of those arguments which commonly end in hair-pulling. Nobody would have recognized in this enraged figure the obliging, vulgar, good-natured Mrs. Dines of the voyage down to this time.

"How can I give you your necklace?" said the Captain. "It is on board a fast steamer already many leagues below the horizon, and bound to—to—the devil, I hope," said he.

"Do you mean to tell me I have lost them diamonds for good?" cried Mrs. Dines.

"I wish I could say No to that!" exclaimed Sparshot.

Mrs. Dines breathed short, and the Captain drew

back a step, conceiving by her manner of opening and shutting her hands, as though she were testing the strength of her fingers and nails, that she was about to rush at him. Instead, however, of rushing at him, she tossed her hands to her face and wept most miserably. But when this fit of weeping was passed she attacked the Captain afresh, commanded him the instant a breath of wind should come to turn the ship's head round and sail for Madeira; and if nothing was to be heard of the yacht and the two horrid thieves at the island, to proceed straight to England to enable her to send the police after them. "For, make no mistake," cried she, wagging her forefinger at Sparshot, "that necklace ain't going to be lost through your carelessness. You favored that widder—I know you did; I watched you unbeknown; you was all smiles and civility to her. What right had you to take her to your cabin? Did you ever show her my necklace without asking my leave? Who's to say you didn't? And, oh, the sinful, wicked folly of lockin' up the keys of the safe in an old wooden drawer!"

And so she stormed on, growing more and more vulgar as her mood grew more and more intemperate, until Sparshot, unable to endure the insults she shouted at him in the hearing of Mr. Parr and the man at the wheel and a number of the 'tween-deck passengers who had crowded up the poop-ladders to watch the quarrel, after contemptuously looking up and down

her shapeless figure four or five times, turned upon his heel and went below.

At the breakfast-table little was said; Sparshot sat sulky and scowling. Mrs. Dines had declined to occupy her chair on his right, and had taken a seat at the table at whose head the mate sat. By this time she had exhausted her temper and her threats, and did little more than fan herself, occasionally twisting her head towards the Captain with an expression of rage and misery in her face. The other passengers—those, at all events, who had been plundered—had talked themselves into a common-sense view of the situation. It was clearly not in the power of Captain Sparshot to recover the stolen property, and they left the poor fellow to sulk over his plate of cold ham and cup of coffee, or gaze with a deprecatory scowl around the table, and particularly at Mrs. Dines, contenting themselves with discoursing upon the prolonged calm, the intolerable heat, and matters of that sort. Before Mr. Parr had finished his breakfast Sparshot had gone on deck and was calling to him.

"Did that Major and the widow bring any luggage on board?" inquired the Captain.

"I'll inquire, sir."

"Break out whatever there may be belonging to them in the hold, and tell the steward to overhaul the cabins they occupied and report to me."

This order was forthwith executed. Among the passengers' heavy luggage stowed away below there

was found a large and somewhat handsome trunk or box with the words "Hon^ble. Mrs. Wreathock" painted in white letters upon the lid. Mr. Parr informed the Captain that it was locked, and the Captain desired the mate to tell the carpenter to prize the lid open. The box contained nothing but a number of bags filled with pebbles called shingle, on the top of which was packed a quantity of compressed hay or straw. The steward, after searching the cabins the couple had occupied, reported the discovery of a couple of plain portmanteaux containing wearing apparel, together with divers necessary articles for the toilet, some boots and shoes, and the like. The Major and his sister had indeed gone to sea very poorly equipped as regards baggage; whence, of course, it was understood that they had not contemplated making a passage that should extend very far south of Madeira.

"How on earth would they have managed for clothes—how the dickens would they presently have made shift to appear at the table and on deck," said Sparshot to his chief officer, "if the steamer had entirely lost sight of us?"

"They never could have bargained for that, sir," said the mate; "it could not have entered into their calculations. They were not sailors, and didn't think of it."

Nevertheless these and kindred speculations, together with Mrs. Dines's insults, the realization of the enor-

mous loss she and the other ladies had sustained, and the memory of the passengers' outspokenness when the robbery was first discovered, amply accounted for the face of bewilderment and temper which Sparshot carried about with him during the morning; for his sullen dodging of every passenger who attempted to accost him, and for his frequent employment of nautical terms when he spoke to Mr. Parr about the second mate, and the midnight flight of the Major and the widow, and the great heat and the breathless calm.

It was some time shortly before three o'clock that afternoon—when not so much as a cat's-paw of air shaded a hand's-breadth of the slimy green surface sluggishly winding into the haze of the junction of ocean and sky—that the smoke of a steamer was descried in the north-west. There was nothing remarkable in the smoke of a steamer showing upon the horizon. The third officer of the ship, a young man named Pinnager, who was keeping a lookout for Mr. Sampson until the effects of the dram of Benedictine should have worn off, levelled a glass at the distant smoke, and then went on pacing the deck. But the column of smoke enlarged; the fibrine line of it grew black and more defined; and presently, when Mr. Pinnager directed the telescope at it for the second time, he made out the two masts in one of a schooner-rigged steamer heading direct for the *Southern Cross*.

By this time the attention of those passengers who were on deck had been taken by the approaching

steamer, and they gazed with interest, for she promised a break in the profound monotony of the day; there would probably be the entertainment of an exchange of signals; probably the steamer would pass within hail, and in any case there would be the refreshing spectacle of an object in motion.

It was not very long after the third mate had first caught sight of the smoke that the hull of the vessel, whose speed was manifestly some ten or twelve knots in the hour, rose above the edge of the ocean. Young Mr. Pinnager took a long look at her through the glass, then very quietly left the poop, and knocked upon the door of the Captain's cabin.

"Come in!" called out Sparshot.

Mr. Pinnager entered, cap in hand. The Captain was writing.

"The steamer that kept us company since Madeira," said Mr. Pinnager, "has hove in sight again, and is approaching us fast."

The Captain stared idly at him for a moment or two, and exclaimed, "Are you sure?"

"Perfectly sure, sir; I made sure before reporting her."

Sparshot put on his cap, and rushing on deck, picked up the glass, looked, and cried out, "Yes, she is our Madeira friend!"

The excitement now was even greater than it had been when it was discovered that the Major and the widow had left the ship, and that the safe was plun-

dered. The news got wind as if by magic. The forecastle was crowded by the ship's company and 'tween-deck passengers staring as one man at the approaching vessel. Captain Sparshot and his chief officer posted themselves right aft on the ship's quarter, and by their demeanor gave Mrs. Dines and the Sparkes, and the Du Boulays and the rest of the passengers clearly to understand that not a syllable was to be addressed to them, that they were not for an instant to be intruded upon, until the intentions of the steamer were known. She was indeed most unmistakably the same screw schooner that had kept company with the *Southern Cross* down to the preceding day. She rolled lightly as she came along with a lift of white foam at her cut-water, and a mile of iridescent ribbon-like wake astern of her. She was schooner-rigged, her yards very square, her white canvas stowed with the precision of a man-of-war. She headed directly for the *Southern Cross*, and by a quarter past four she was lying abreast of the ship within easy speaking distance, with a group of seamen in her bows gazing at the Australian liner, and a squarely-built man in a blue cloth jacket, white drill trousers and canvas shoes, upon her bridge.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted the squarely-built man from the steamer's bridge.

"Holloa!" responded Sparshot, with a flourish of his arm.

"I have something very important to communicate,"

cried the squarely-built man, "and wish to see the master of that ship aboard my vessel."

"Will you not come aboard me?" shouted Sparshot.

"No, sir," returned the other. "I want to see the master here."

"I will send my chief officer," bawled Sparshot.

"I will only communicate with the captain," cried the sqarely-built man; "he may come aboard with an armed boat's crew if he is in doubt."

Captain Sparshot contemptuously tossed his arm.

"Man my gig, sir," said he to Mr. Parr.

The gig hanging astern was lowered, manned by five stout seamen; Sparshot entered her, and was pulled aboard the steamer. He easily climbed the low side of the yacht, and was received at the gangway by the squarely-built man.

Sparshot's mind had been so unhinged by the calamitous and depressing incidents of the day and night, that it was scarcely surprising he should send a hurried, anxious glance along the deck of the little vessel, scarce knowing, perhaps, but that he might behold a long twenty-four pounder, ill-concealed by a tarpaulin, on her forecastle, and a crew of men much more suggestive by apparel, ear-rings, and color of skin, of the West Indian waters than of Bugsby's Reach and the Isle of Dogs.

"I have the pleasure of addressing the master of the *Southern Cross?*" said the squarely-built man, in a strong salt voice.

"You have, sir; Captain Sparshot, at your service. What vessel is this?"

"The yacht *Sunflower*—Captain Dennis Brine. I am Captain Brine, sir; and a nice quandary I'm in. There is a man cut his throat below. But I wasn't to be stopped, sir! What! stand to be run in as a confederate, and to sarve out the rest of my natural life in jail—*me* who was chartered for a job that mightn't, it's true, be tarmed what you call strictly honest; but compared with the true meaning of this herrand—" he dashed his right fist into the palm of his left hand, and raising his voice into a roar with the excitement that worked in him, cried, "had they had fifty throats between 'em to cut, the slitting of every blooming one of them wouldn't ha' stopped me from doing what's right and proper."

"What's all this about?" exclaimed Sparshot, steadfastly surveying Captain Brine with eyes slowly brightening with hope and expectation.

"I'll tell you the yarn right away off, Captain Sparshot," said Brine, speaking hoarsely, strongly, and rapidly. "This yacht was placed by her owner in the hands of an agent dwelling in the City of London for to hire out to any parties that might apply. The agent sends for me. 'Brine,' he says, 'the *Sunflower* has been hired by the month by a gentleman who has paid down a deposit. Now turn to, Brine,' he says, says he, 'get a crew together as fast as you can, and fill your bunkers. Be on board on such and such a

day,' says he, 'when the gent will visit the yacht, and you can take his instructions as to victualling her and the likes of that.' Well, sir, to cut this part, the gent came down to the yacht where she was then lying off Erith, and what do you think he says? 'My name,' says he, 'is Major the Honorable Sebastian Stopford-Creake, and my father,' says he, 'is Lord Horncastle; but don't let the agent know who I am,' says he, 'and if ye want to know *why*, you'll find out in a minute.' He gives me a good cigar, and thus proceeds: 'There is a young lady, says he,' 'who's a fortune, and who's going out to Australia in a ship called the *Southern Cross*. She is consigned to the care of the captain of the vessel, Captain Sparshot, who has received strict orders to keep a sharp eye upon her.'"

"God bless my heart!" ejaculated Sparshot.

"'She's being sent out,' this Major says to me," continued Captain Brine, "'to be married to a gent in Australia. She hates his name; she says the very thought of him is poison to her. Captain Brine,' he goes on, 'this young lady and me are in love; we passionately worship the ground each other's foot treads on,' says he, 'and we would elope in this country if we could, but the lady's friends won't give us a chance. Now what I intend to do,' says the Major, 'is to hire this yacht for the purpose of running away with the young lady from the ship.'"

Captain Brine paused, pulled off his cap and wiped his forehead.

"Keep all on — I am following you — don't stop speaking!" cried Sparshot, in a voice that trembled with eagerness and astonishment.

Captain Brine resumed: "'I shall want you,' says this Major, 'to proceed to Madeira, and there await the arrival of the *Southern Cross*, which I have ascertained calls at that island. I then propose,' says he, 'that you sail from the island when the ship sails, and that you keep her company, taking care, if you can manage it, not to excite suspicion by so doing. There are sure,' says he, 'to be plenty of dark, quiet nights to fall in with 'twixt Madeira and the equator, and on one of them nights I'll contrive that a rocket shall be sent up to give you notice that we are ready, so that you may bring your steamer as near to the *Southern Cross* as she can approach in the dark without being observed; you will then send a boat to lie off the ship —I am allowing,' says he, 'that it is a still, calm night; if it ain't, of course I shouldn't signal — you'll send a boat, and she will receive me and the lady, and that's the object,' says he, 'for which I have hired this yacht.'"

"I suppose you know—" here interrupted Sparshot.

"Let me finish my yarn, sir, begging *your* pardon," exclaimed Captain Brine; "you'll find I pretty nigh well know everything. I was somewhat confused and surprised—but times had been hard; I was in want of a job — I thought the matter over while I looked at him; and after all, thought I, his doings will be no

consarn of mine so long as they don't involve me in anything rascally; and though I'm no friend to eloping, as it's termed, preferring all things ship-shape for my own part, still, a runaway business of this sort wasn't to be reckoned criminal, as the saying is. And so, after a spell of thinking, I agreed to carry out his wishes, never perhaps seriously believing they was to be compassed; for how was I to make sure of keeping yonder ship in sight? and how was *he* to calculate on just such a night as last night was a drawing round to help him. But to cut this, sir, he told me to victual the yacht, and gave me a check for the money I wanted, drawed out in the name of Richard Montgomery, which was duly honored. Several times he visited the yacht before I sailed, and we consarted our plans. I boarded your ship at Madeira, and asked for to see the young lady just out of curiosity, but of course she wasn't visible. And the rest, Captain Sparshot, you pretty well know."

"Where's the jewelry?" said Sparshot.

"In that chart-house," answered the other, pointing to a small structure with large windows abaft the bridge.

"Is it all there?"

"All there, sir; all I found, anyhow, and, as I believe, all they brought aboard."

"Let me see it," said Sparshot; and Captain Brine led the way to the yacht's chart-house. He opened a locker and produced the jewelry, the whole of it

wrapped up in a new piece of drill. Captain Sparshot opened the case containing Mrs. Dines's diamonds, and in the case lay the costly and beautiful gems sparkling gloriously. He examined the rest of the parcels, and found that nothing was missing. Every object that had been stolen, down to the little morocco case, smaller than a man's thumb, containing a pair of diamond hoops for the ears belonging to Mrs. du Boulay, was before him, and all was once again in his possession. He grasped Captain Brine by the hand.

"You are as a brother to me," he cried; "a brother sailor, Captain Brine, a true man, and may God bless you for the relief of mind you've given me!"

"A sailor I am, Captain Sparshot," answered Brine; "but an honest man first of all—at least I try to be, and nothing else much signifies. But stop," he continued, "till I tell you how I found out the true errand of the parties below. They came aboard in the yacht's boat. A light was shown when the man who called himself Major dropped his signal overboard, and the boat headed straight for the schooner. The parties went into the cabin, the boat was hoisted aboard, and the yacht put full speed ahead, the course due north, for my instructions were that our destination would not be settled till the runaways were aboard the yacht, him as called himself the Major not knowing in what part of the sea we might find ourselves when that happened. About half an hour after they had arrived I went below, not to seek

them, for I reckoned that him as called himself the Major would send for me when he wanted me, but to shift my shoes which pinched me. I thought to find the parties in the living room, 'stead of which they'd withdrawn into a berth 'longside the one I had been using. I entered my berth softly, not wishing them to know that I was there, lest they might consider it a liberty for me to be in the cabin at all. I could hear their voices plain, and I hadn't stood listening a minute when I tell ye, Captain Sparshot, I clean forgot my corns and never gave my tight shoes another thought. He was telling her how he'd done it; how he had forced the lock of the drawer of your table, and the funk he was in when, while he was actually pulling out the contents of the safe, some one knocked at the door of your cabin, sir, whoever it was getting no answer and going away. He filled his pockets, put the key of the safe back, and crept out, nobody obsarving him."

"What was the hour?" cried Sparshot, whose nostrils were large, and whose eyes were on fire and whose face was full of blood with the emotions excited by Brine's narrative.

"I couldn't gather," answered Brine; "but I allow it took place some time last evening. But to cut this, sir, I heard enough to convince me that these parties were not a pair of runaway sweethearts, but a brace of audacious swindlers fresh from a tremendous job of plunder with the booty upon them, for they talked

"'HE HAS KILLED HIMSELF!'"

much of them diamonds," said he, pointing to the case containing Mrs. Dines's necklace, "and I heard him as called himself the Major say that, though they would have to dispose of the stones separate, he wouldn't take fifteen thousand pound for that night's work. On this I softly creeps out, and going on deck calls the mate and the engineer and tells them all that I'd heard. I then ordered the mate to call the men quietly down into the forecastle, and explain the true nature of the errand for which all hands of us had been engaged. We needed to think what was best to be done, and though I had made up my mind, it required a little reflection before acting right away off. I made a note of the bearings of your ship, and I told the engineer to slow down, but not so to slacken the speed as to render the alteration in the motion of the engines noticeable by the parties below. I was pretty sure that such an audacious villain as that there Major had tarned out to be would never go unarmed, and much time was lost in our manœuvring to secure him without standing to be shot. We managed it at last. At five o'clock this morning he came out of his berth, and called to me through the cabin skylight to step below. The lady was sitting at the table. The Major begins to talk to me of making for Boston. On this I fetches the engineer, as if to consult with him in the Major's presence upon the stock of coal aboard; then, at a signal, the engineer and me threw ourselves upon the Major, and at the same moment the mate comes

running below. The woman shrieked out and laid hold of me with the strength of a man. We secured the Major and searched him, and sure enough, just as I had expected, found a loaded revolver upon him. I told him that I had found out the true object for which he had hired the yacht, and locked him up in one of the berths, leaving the lady loose to chuck herself overboard if she liked; and on searching the cabin they had been in when I overheard them I found the jewelry. I should have picked ye up early in the day, Captain, but either my bearings was wrong or the chap at the wheel hadn't steered the course I had given him; and you have cost us a bit of a hunt since about eight o'clock this morning."

"But did you tell me this Major had cut his throat?" cried Sparshot, who had followed Brine's narrative with breathless attention.

"Aye, sir. The lady had been alone all day—sitting at the cabin table without lifting her head, never taking no notice of me when I looked in—sitting as motionless as one of them graven images which Christians are ordered not to worship. This afternoon, all on a sudden, she gave a dreadful scream. I rushed below and found her pointing to the door of her cabin, where her pal lay locked up. She cried out, '*He has killed himself!*' That was all, sir; she never spoke again. I unlocked and opened the door, and found the Major on the deck with a fearful wound in his throat and the blood running from it like water

from a ship's pump when ye man it. He was stone dead. The woman took one look, went to the table, sat down again, and there she has been ever since, without life or motion. Ye can see her by stepping to the skylight."

CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN BRINE'S REWARD.

Captain Sparshot slowly pocketed the several parcels of jewelry, thrusting one in here and another in there. The case containing Mrs. Dines's jewels was a tight fit, but there was plenty of room in his pockets for the rest of the precious stuff. Captain Brine stood looking on while Sparshot was thus occupied. The calm was still as dead as ever it had been. Within easy speaking distance of the yacht lay the *Southern Cross*, with the red light of the westering sun glancing off her spars and glossy rigging as she slightly rolled. All the first-class passengers were assembled on the poop, and they stared almost continually, whether through telescopes or binocular glasses or with the naked eye, at the steamer, wondering what was happening on board of her, and whether the jewelry was safe, and whether the Major and his sister would be conveyed to the ship in irons; and they also wondered in what part of the vessel they would be imprisoned when they arrived, and what sort of figures they would cut in the view of the crowd of people assembled upon the decks of the *Southern Cross* when they were handed up through the gangway.

Captain Brine kept silence until Captain Sparshot had pocketed the jewelry. He then said:

"There is one thing I wish to point out, sir—don't think that I want to represent myself and my men as having any sort of claim upon you and them who have been robbed. It's entirely a matter for your own kindness, and for the views your passengers may choose to take of this here traverse. The person we'd been told we were to look to for our money is dead. Being dead nothing more need be said about him, good nor bad. But his death leaves a matter of two or three hundred pound owing—"

"Enough," interrupted Sparshot. "Say no more, Captain Brine; leave the rest to me. If the recovery of these goods," he said, smiting his pockets, "isn't worth a big reward, you shall have them back again."

The two captains, quitting the chart-room, walked to a skylight upon the yacht's quarter-deck, and looked down.

The frames of the skylight stood wide open; Captain Sparshot peered, and beheld the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock seated beside a table in the lifeless posture that had been described to him by Captain Brine. Her cheek was supported by her hand, her elbow by the table; her eyes were rooted to the deck, and though she must have been perfectly sensible of the presence of the two captains just above, she never stirred.

"Is her heart broke, d'ye think?" hoarsely whis-

pered Captain Sparshot, touched by the anguish of mind that was suggested by the woman's posture; touched also by the memory of her sweetness and her gentleness, and her beauty and her quality; for beautiful and of high degree the honest mariner had truly considered her to have been. "Is her heart broke, d'ye think?" said he.

"God He knows," answered Captain Brine. "I'll hail her." He put his head into the skylight. "Madam," he softly called.

She looked up with a mere flash of white face and a swift, blind sort of glance, instantly resuming her former posture.

"Come below and see the body," said Captain Brine.

But Sparshot's head shook as though to a shudder, and, pinching Brine's sleeve, he drew him away from the skylight.

"I've got the jewels," said he, "and I want now to go wholly clear of this job. I don't wish to receive that unfortunate woman aboard my ship. You can guess why. They might force me to hand her over to justice on our arrival, and I am for letting her be — I am for letting the poor thing be," he added, clinching his fist and swinging it impetuously through the air. "I don't doubt she was under the thumb of the man who is dead. You'll carry her home, Captain Brine, and put her quietly ashore and let her go her way. T'other was the thief. She is a

lone woman, and who can tell how much she has been wronged by the man who called himself an Honorable and a Major?"

Captain Brine mused while he tapped the deck with the toe of his boot.

"Well, Captain," said he, "be it as you say. The lady is a countrywoman, I allows."

"She is."

"Then she can scarce fail to have acquaintances in England. She shall go ashore quietly, as you say, if she don't die on my hands before we get home. All the same, it's a blooming mess for a man to find himself in. I'm thinking of myself. I'm sorry for the lady, but I'll be glad to find my old friend Brine," he exclaimed, with an odd, hard smile, "muck'd up in any sort of seafaring job rather than this. There is the body to bury; then is there anything in scrapers to get that stain out of the planks? And, again, what's a man to do with a lonely woman upon his hands, a woman who won't eat and who won't drink, and who won't go to bed, nor leave the table, nor come on deck. It's what I call a quandary. Has she got any duds?"

"Clothes enough," answered Captain Sparshot. "They shall be packed and put in the boat. Come you now aboard with me that the passengers may hear what's expected of them."

Captain Brine called to his mate that he was going on board the *Southern Cross*, and bade him give an

eye to the cabin; he then followed Sparshot into the gig, and the two skippers were put aboard the Australian liner. The 'tween-deck passengers came hurrying from the forecastle to the quarter-deck to see them arrive, and the saloon passengers advanced in a body to the break of the poop in expectation of Captain Sparshot instantly giving them all the news he had to communicate. But Sparshot, instead of mounting to the poop, entered the saloon with Captain Brine; and first he ordered the steward to pack up the clothes and other effects of Major Stopford-Creake and Mrs. Wreathock, and hand the baggage into the boat that lay alongside; and he then told the man to go on deck and give his compliments to the passengers, one and all, and request the pleasure of their presence in the saloon.

The first to arrive was Mrs. Dines. In a very few moments the whole of the passengers were in the saloon, with Captain Brine convulsing his figure with sea bows, as Sparshot pronounced his name to one and then another of the people. Hardly was this ceremony of introduction ended when Mrs. Dines cried out, "Is my necklace safe?"

"It is, ma'am," answered Sparshot, stiffly. "I have it here," and he struck his breast with the flat of his hand.

"Oh, you dear, good creature!" shrieked Mrs. Dines; and falling back in her chair she uttered scream after scream of hysterical laughter, making so

much noise and causing so much confusion that Sparshot could make no progress with the business he had in hand until the steward had silenced the lady by almost forcing her to swallow a glass of brandy-and-water.

Sparshot then looking round him, addressed the passengers; and first he made all those who were interested easy in their minds, by stating that every article of the plundered jewelry had been handed to him by Captain Brine, a man he was proud to call a sailor, a man who (with his—Brine's—permission) he should be proud to number among the most esteemed and valued of his friends. He then repeated Captain Brine's story as it had been related to himself, told his hearers that the man who had represented himself as Major the Honorable Sebastian Stopford-Creake lay dead with his throat cut—a self-inflicted wound—in the cabin of the yacht he had chartered with a view to one of the most audacious robberies ever contemplated and attempted. He also bluntly and briefly informed them that the Honorable Mrs. Wreathock would remain on board the *Sunflower*.

Many murmurs of horror escaped the passengers when they heard that the Major had cut his throat, for ship-board life brings people very close together; it establishes what may be termed an *intimacy* of acquaintance that is impossible on shore; Major Stopford-Creake had been thought much of and made much of; his real or fictitious claim of social distinc-

tion had accentuated the familiarity of his presence, and it grieved a few and shocked all to learn that the unhappy man had cut his throat.

"What's to become of his sister?" said Mrs. Dines, whose unnatural hilarity had been extinguished by the brandy-and-water.

Sparshot made no answer. He pulled the various articles of jewelry from his pocket, placed them in a heap before him on the table, and then in a steady voice and with a slight frown, he begged the passengers to fix their eyes upon the jewels and ask themselves this question: "How is such magnificent honesty as is illustrated by the restoration of this heap of jewels—worth in the rough, say, from thirty-five to forty thousand pounds—how is such splendid honesty to be rewarded? By thanks? d'ye say by *thanks*, ladies and gentlemen? Surely not." And then, after pausing, he told them how Captain Brine was situated; how that now the Major was dead, without, probably, leaving enough behind him to purchase the value of a farthing's worth of silver spoons, Captain Brine, his officers, and his men, would return home without receiving a penny-piece of the wages they had signed for.

"I ask to hear no more talk," cried Mrs. Dines, at this point. "Open that case, Captain Sparshot, and let me see my necklace for myself."

Captain Sparshot handed the case to her. She opened it and gazed at the flashing diamonds.

"Call Pittar, somebody," she cried. Pittar arrived. "Fetch me my check-book," said Mrs. Dines; "likewise ink and a pen. You'll find my check-book in my jewel-case, and the keys in the right-hand corner of the portmanteau with the big 'D' on it."

The check-book was brought, and Mrs. Dines, who was inexpert with her pen, laboriously made out a draft upon an Australian bank.

"If that will do," she exclaimed, as she passed it to Captain Brine; "you deserve it, I am sure."

Captain Brine read the check slowly: read the date, the name of the bank, the signature, the amount.

"It's a noble gift, lady," he said, bowing to her; "I thank you for it from my heart—truly I do—and in the name of my mate and crew, I thank you."

"Mrs. Dines, what have you given?" asked Mr. du Boulay.

"Five hundred pounds," answered Mrs. Dines.

Mrs. Sparkes made a face at her husband. Mr. du Boulay went to his cabin, and Mrs. Dines wrote a second check which she folded and held.

"Pass the ink, please," said Mr. du Boulay, returning with a check-book in his hand, and he filled up a draft, payable to Captain Brine, for one hundred pounds.

"I wish I could afford more," said Mr. Sparkes, handing Captain Brine a Bank of England note for fifty pounds.

Twenty minutes later the captain of the yacht had

drunk to the health of the passengers of the *Southern Cross*, had shaken hands all round, and was walking to the gangway accompanied by Captain Sparshot. But while he stood at the gangway exchanging a final word with Sparshot, Mrs. Dines came out of the saloon and approached him.

"Here, Captain Brine," she exclaimed; "the woman's alone, and may want a friend when you land her. Change it afore giving it to her that she mayn't know who sent it."

She slipped a piece of folded paper into Captain Brine's hand, and hurried back into the saloon. Brine opened the paper. "A check for fifty pounds," said he.

Ten minutes later the *Sunflower* had started for her run home, with Captain Brine on the bridge flourishing his hat, his crew at the rail loudly cheering, and the red ensign rising and falling at her main topmasthead in graceful farewell of the becalmed *Southern Cross*.

Captain Sparshot never thought to hear again of Mrs. Wreathock after the *Sunflower* had sunk behind the sea-line into the dusk of the evening in the north there. He would say that it was the same to his fancy as if she had died and gone the way of the Major, when once the yacht's propeller had driven the little craft out of sight.

Strangely enough, however, on his return from this

same voyage, it happened that some matter of business called Sparshot from the East India Docks to Cornhill, and when leaving the railway station at Fenchurch Street his steps were arrested by a man who halted dead in front of him, with his hand outstretched. It was Captain Brine. Sparshot, of course, instantly recognized him, and the two seamen cordially shook hands. Sparshot had nearly an hour to spare; Brine, too, was at leisure; they repaired to an adjacent house of entertainment, and Sparshot ordered lunch for himself and Captain Brine.

It will be supposed that their conversation ran almost wholly upon Mrs. Wreathock. And yet Captain Brine had not much to communicate. He told Sparshot that on his return to the yacht—that is to say, on his leaving the bridge to go below to look after Mrs. Wreathock, he found her in a swoon by the dead body of the Major. He called for help, placed her in a bunk in another cabin, and within the same hour his men dropped the body of the Major overboard. Mrs. Wreathock came to after a long spell of unconsciousness; but she refused all nourishment; Brine believed that she intended to starve herself, and was at his wits' ends to know how to deal with her. He supposed she might be friendless, that she was dreading her return to England; and thinking to put some heart into her he told her that one of the passengers had given him fifty pounds, which he would

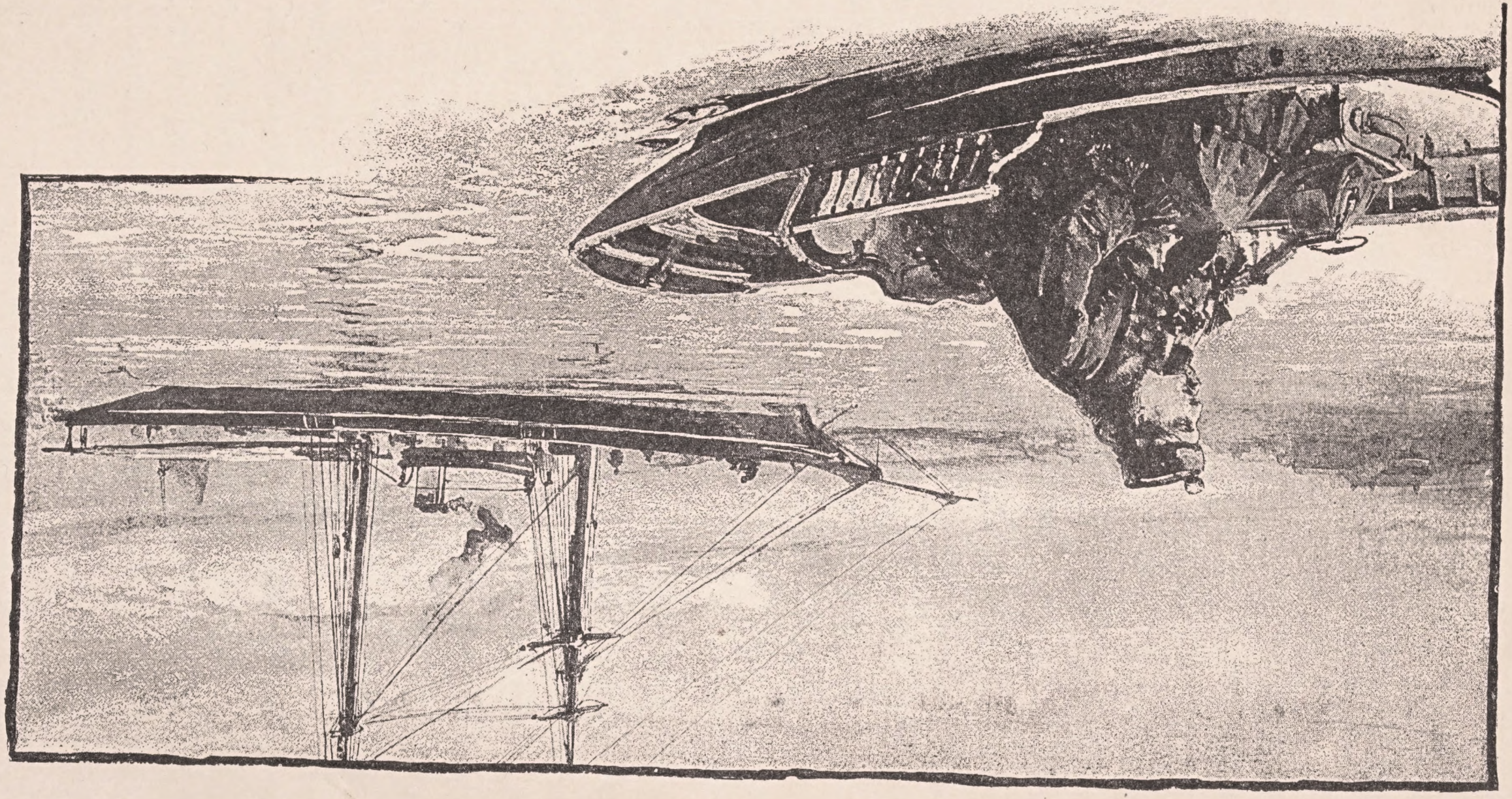
hand to her when he cashed the check on their arrival.

She broke silence for the first time since the yacht had steamed away from the *Southern Cross*, by asking him to tell her who it was that had given him that money for her. He said that he was as good as under a promise not to tell; she pleaded, and, unable to resist her, he answered, "Mrs. Dines." She hid her face and silently wept; but after that time a change came over her. She ate and drank; she allowed Brine to take her on deck; she seemed grateful for the attention he showed her.

He told her he was willing to land her at any port in England she chose to name, and her answer was that one port was the same as another. She never mentioned the name of the Major, never referred to his death, or asked what had become of his body. Captain Brine tried to sound her as to her past, but the efforts of a rough seaman in that way, as he himself admitted, could not but be clumsy and ridiculous; if ever he questioned her it was with too much bluntness, and all the time they were together he never could extract one syllable of information as to her own or the Major's past.

The yacht arrived at Gravesend, and Mrs. Wreathock remained on board while Captain Brine went to London to negotiate the checks he had received. He returned and handed her fifty sovereigns; her luggage was then put into a boat, she shook hands with Cap-

"SHE WENT ASHORE."



tain Brine, went ashore, and from that hour down to this moment of meeting with Captain Sparshot he had seen and heard no more of her.

Entirely influenced by curiosity, Sparshot went to work on his own account, and called upon the manager of the bank upon which the Major, in the name of Montgomery, had drawn the check which he gave to Captain Brine. To pursue the skipper's researches would be to enter upon a long story; enough if it is said here that by help of certain statements made to him by the manager of the bank he ascertained that the Major's name was as he had signed it—Richard Montgomery; that he was the son of a cavalry officer, that he had enlisted when a young man, obtained a commission, and resigned on being proved guilty of some dishonorable act.

Here the clew failed; but Sparshot afterwards picked it up again by learning that Captain Montgomery had dwelt for some years in Boulogne-sur-Mer, from which place he had "run," heavily in debt, accompanied by a young lady who had been governess to a family with whose members he was intimate. This young lady was undoubtedly the so-called Honorable Mrs. Wreathock.

How Captain Montgomery had obtained the money to enable him to deposit a considerable sum for the hire of the yacht, and to engage cabins for himself and his companion on board the *Southern Cross*, Sparshot could never learn. The worthy skipper was always

of opinion that the gallant captain had been backed, and that the inspiration of the audacious conspiracy was to be laid to the account of the newspaper paragraph which prefaces this unambitious recital of a strange ocean story.

THE END.

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